



# in the Land of the Living

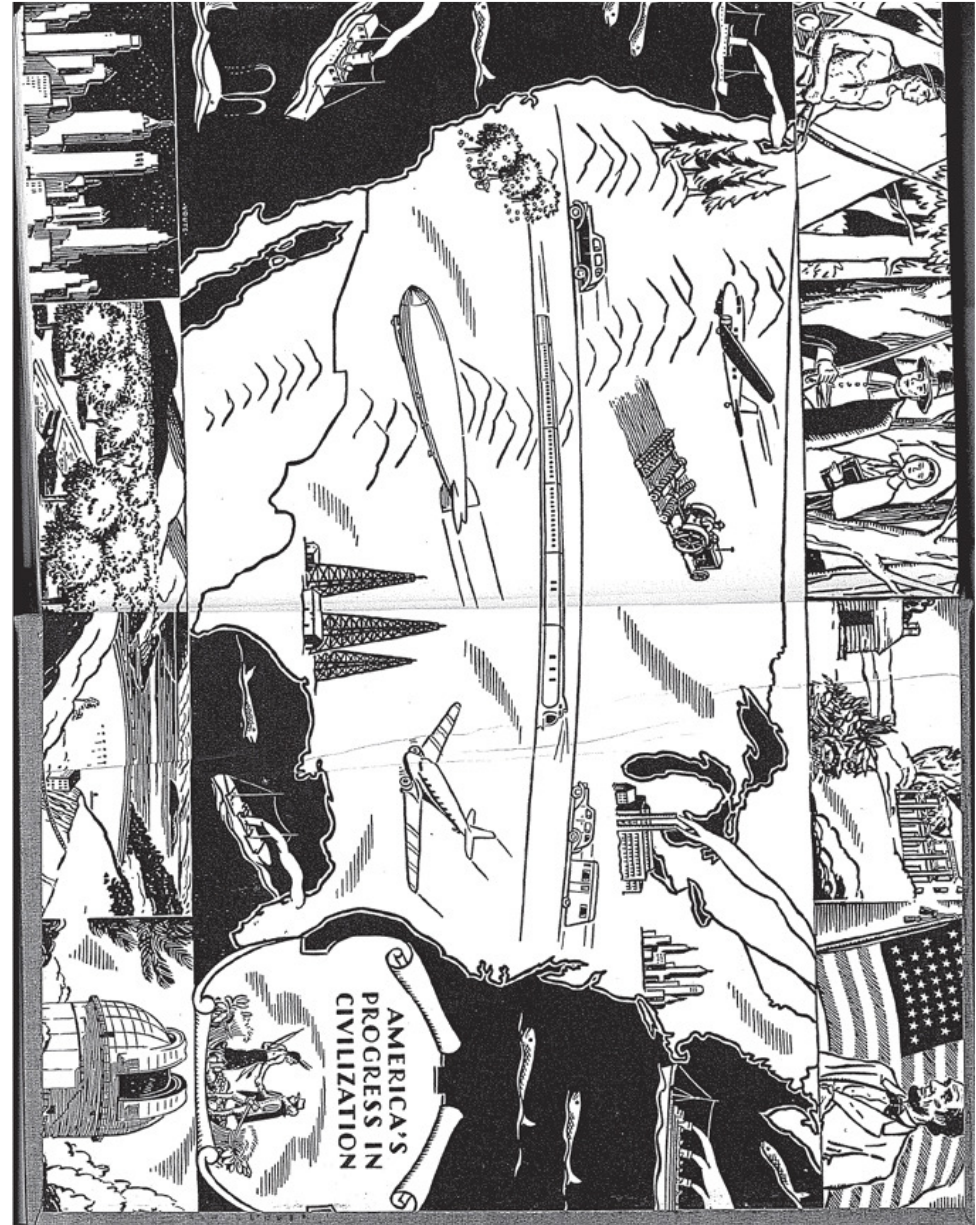
#5

a journal of anarcho-primitivism and christianity



## CONTENTS

- 04. Love** - John Zerzan
- 07. I Eat You, You Eat Me** - Smoke
- 10. The Undeniable Ground** - Andrew Mandell
- 10. Resisting the Domesticators** - Andy Lewis
- 11. Towards a Rewilding of the Mind** - Liza Menno Bloom
- 14. The Domestication of Origins** - Andy Lewis
- 16. The Body and Revolt** (excerpt) - Massimo Pas-samami
- 17. Unearthing the Sensual** - Anonymous
- 18. If a Bible Story Could Stop a Culture War** - Ched Myers
- 21. Goatwalking, On Errantry** (excerpt) - Jim Corbett
- 22. Beyond Haiti** - John Connor
- 32. Rilke**
- 33. Woman in Nature** (excerpt) - Susan Griffin
- 34. Community** - John Zerzan
- 35. The Tribes of Yahweh Epilogue** (excerpt) - Norman Gottwald
- 36. Death and Resurrection** - Jared Himstedt
- 37. Briars** - Joel Cimmarron
- 38. Analyzing Avatar** (excerpt) - Nekeisha Alexis-Baker
- 40. Against a Moral/Pacifist Reading of the Bible** - John Tracey
- 42. Interview with Ward Churchill** - Andy Lewis and Liza Menno Bloom
- 45. A Poem** - Andrew Mandell
- 46. Re-imagining Health Care** - Rusty Poulette
- 51. The rebels Dark Laughter** (excerpt) - Bruno Filippi
- 52. John Ball: Primitivist** - John Connor
- 54. The Spell of the Sensuous** (excerpt) - David Abram
- 61. Fire** - Jared Himstedt
- 62. I Speak Only for Myself**—Bucko Rinsky
- 64. Casting Out Demons** - Andy Lewis
- 66. Anarchy and Ecstasy , Bewilderness** (Anarchy and Ecstasy excerpt) - John Moore
- 70. Women Who Run with Wolves** (excerpt) - Clarissa Pink



To demolish barriers and walls, to recover the unconscious and reactivate it in everyday life — these are metaphors for a process which bewilderment can help to facilitate. Bewilderment is an extreme condition, an encounter with transcendence, possession by elemental energies. But it allows the possibility of more measured and integrated lifeways. After such experiences, individuals and communities can accept convivial coexistence because they wittingly live within and amidst the oceanic consciousness. And such a state characterizes the condition of total anarchy.

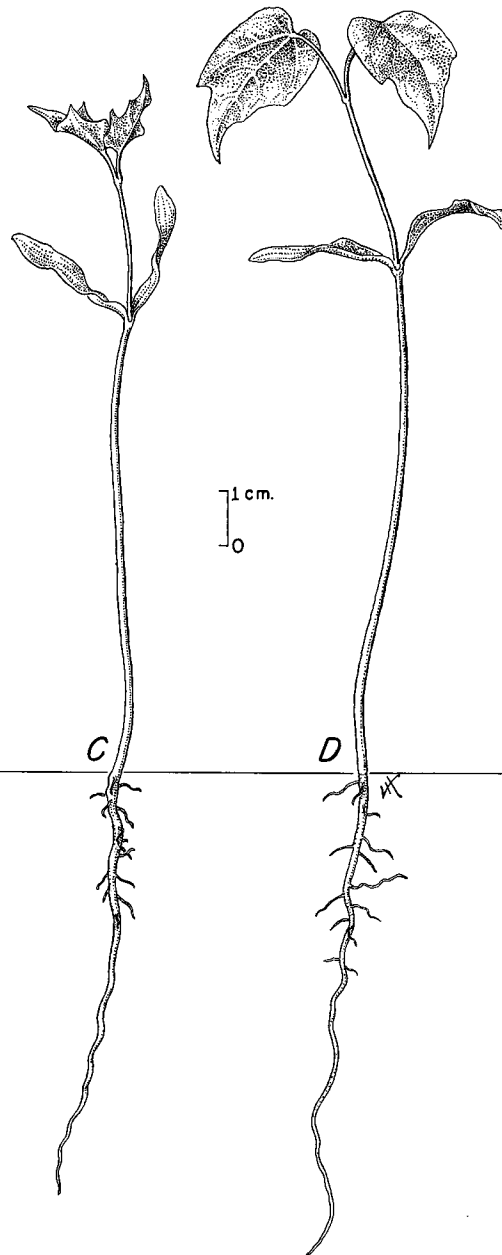
## WOMEN WHO RUN WITH THE WOLVES

By Clarissa Pinkola Estes  
(excerpt)

Over-intellectualization can obscure the patterns of the instinctual nature of women...

She [the archetype of the Wild Woman] resides in the guts, not in the head. She can track and run and summon and repel. She can sense, camouflage, and love deeply. She is intuitive, typical, and normative. She is utterly essential to women's mental and soul health.

This is why women are knowing creatures; they are made, in essence, of the skin of the sole, which feels everything. This idea that the skin of the foot is sentient had the ring of a truth, for an acculturated Kiche tribeswoman once told me that she'd worn her first pair of shoes when she was twenty years old and was still not used to walking 'con los ojos vendados,' with blindfolds on her feet.



In the Land of the Living #5, a long time in the making but hopefully it was worth the wait. The Jesus Radicals Conference: In the Beginning: Anarchism, Christianity and the Roots of Resistance August 6 & 7, 2010 promises to keep up the momentum from last years conference in Memphis and The Gathering Around the Un-hewn Stone in Philadelphia. If you have anything you want to submit send it to us at [www.inthelandoftheliving.org](http://www.inthelandoftheliving.org). Over the next few months the site will be updated with essays and events. There's a ton of great anthropology and essays at [green-anarchy.wikidot.com](http://green-anarchy.wikidot.com) and [www.chedmyers.org](http://www.chedmyers.org) has all of his essays up there now. Thanks to everyone who submitted articles for this issue and for everyone who supports this project.

Wildest Regards, Andy



As this journal picks up speed with each subsequent issue the amount of people contributing continues to grow. We appreciate everyone who is taking the time to record thoughts and send in insightful and challenging work. Please send in anything you think you have to say that contributes to this larger exploration/conversation. We also need more original artwork to include. If you are someone who draws, does collages, prints, photographs, whatever, please send us your images.

I think we still have a long way to go in exploring this intersection of anarcho-primitivism and Christianity. What we learn and discover and teach each other will have an impact on our understanding of our primitivism, anarchism and our faith. If we only allow our faith to inform the others then we do ourselves and our faith a disservice. I encourage all of us to continue on our paths with strength and commitment, and to then return to share from those paths for the benefit and enrichment of the rest of us. - Jared



# LOVE

By John Zerzan

The vertigo of techno-modernity is an invasive sense of nothingness. This certainly also registers on the level of what is directly felt, not just thought. Already in 1984 Frederic Jameson referred to a "waning of affect" in postmodern society, an emotional shriveling or retreat. There is a thinness or flatness making its way into this most vital terrain of being human.

Our affective state is the very texture and timbre of our lives. Nothing is more immediate to us than our own feelings. This is constitutive, gives us the "feel" we have of the world, is what actually connects us to reality. Emotions are cultural artifacts, more so than ideas. In this vein Lucien Febvre (1938, 1941) called for a history of the sensibilities, and Anne Vincent-Buffault (1986) contributed *Histoire des larmes* (*History of Tears*). Are our passions not at the core of our existence?

Every culture has its own emotional climate, every political struggle is an affective one. The fight against the drive of civilization is of course included. Things are felt before they are thought or believed, and so hegemony—or its undoing—has its foundation here. Adam Smith's first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), saw in emotions the thread that weaves together the fabric of society. None of this is a remarkable finding, but we often act as though the field of affect is of no real relevance.

Reason and reflection are somewhat refined expressions of the passions themselves. Antonio Damasio, in fact, provides the notion that "consciousness begins as a feeling, a special kind of feeling to be sure, but a feeling nonetheless...a feeling of knowing" (1999, p. 312). His suggestion reknits the mind-body split so essential to life in mass society.

So many debilitating splits: humans from nature, work from play, among others. We are also being moved away from physical sensations, from direct experience. Feelings are embodied, but what is happening to the context of that embodiment? Isolation grows apace and social bonds keep weakening. Friends are exchanged for online network "friends", and the one-person household is an ever-larger percentage of all homes. Where is home? The subject is dispersed and the social, according to Baudrillard, really no longer exists.

We feel all this, even if the depthlessness of the dominant culture does work, as Jameson suggests, to deform and superficialize our emotional core in its image. This core is its own embodiment, perhaps the strongest redoubt of resistance. Otherwise, in a bitter irony, we wouldn't be in so much dis-ease. We wouldn't be so viscerally aware of the heart-brokenness of this modern void. We wouldn't be so anxious and in so much pain.

*The Affective Turn* (2007) reflects by its title current awareness of the centrality of emotion as culture. Introduced by communist Michael Hardt, it is, however, much more an example of the dominant paradigm than a helpful corrective. The leftist commitment to industrialized Progress is a key part of the onslaught against inner nature. Problem, not solution.

We embody a continuous history of love and suffering, bearing witness to what has moved us. Love, as Kierkegaard stressed, is the ground of all significance in life as we know it. We have loves and cares before we learn to formulate anything in language. As Martin Amis put it (*The Times*, 6/11/06), "Love turns out to be the only part of us that is solid, as the world turns upside down and the screen goes black."

But the failure of the event of love in contemporary societies is as obvious as it is painful, as recounted variously in the novels of Michel Houellebecq, for example. Anarcho-

poses wordless chants, inarticulate noises which resolve into the sounds of the wilderness communing through individuals and groups. Such techniques aim to liberate the involuntary, be it a yelp of pain, an orgasmic groan, a growl of anger, or any other expression. The individual invokes, and waits to discover what energy emerges. Magic consists of merging and participating in these energies, and shaping their manifestations. The nature of the resulting patterns depends on the metaphors and symbols utilized. For example, Starhawk, characterizing subjectivity within hierarchical control structures, discerns three aspects of the self: Younger Self, the playful, sensory element that appears when the infant distinguishes itself from its environment; Talking Self, the later rational faculty of abstraction and codification; and Deep Self, the all-pervasive oceanic consciousness: Imagine Talking Self's domain as a house we live in, and Younger Self's domain as a garden that surrounds it completely. Beneath the garden are the caves and wells of Deep Self; outside it are the other realms of reality, the wilderness. There is no clear dividing line between Younger Self's garden and the wild until Talking Self builds a wall. Younger Self constantly brings in plants and animals... In order to walk out into the wild, we must first pass through the garden.

Or, conversely, in order to examine any piece of the wild Younger Self brings in, in order to name it and set it on the shelves of our house, it must first be brought through the garden. The clearer the paths are, the more familiar we are with their windings and turnings, the friendlier we are with the creatures that inhabit them, the clearer are our contacts with external reality — both physical and metaphysical.[\[5\]](#)

Despite its illuminating qualities, Starhawk's metaphor remains descriptively inadequate because it lacks any notion of the historical relativity of the configuration of elements she discerns within subjectivity. Deep Self can undoubtedly be found beneath the garden (and the house), but also — and most prodigiously — in the wilderness. Here lies Starhawk's major error. Rather than contrariety, one finds identity: the wilderness is Deep Self, and vice versa. Primal peoples realized this fact. They also knew that Talking Self was a useful and beneficial agency, but only so long as it remained contextualized, in situ, within its proper, circumscribed dimensions. Its constant tendency to hypertrophy was recognized, and thwarted by the bewilderment process. But in hierarchical control structures, this tendency is encouraged, and Talking Self becomes deracinated, denatured, (pre)dominant. Hence, in terms of Starhawk's metaphor, the central issue should not be tending the garden, making it more hospitable, indeed civilized, but rather flattening the wall. Younger Self's garden should by degrees imperceptibly shade into the wilderness, allowing for an untroubled access to and from the two complementary areas of hearth and hinterland. Any strict demarcation automatically creates and maintains the divisions of private property.

Jacques Camatte provides another metaphorical representation of this issue when he proposes a recovery of the unconscious:

What is the subconscious if not the affective-sensual life of the human being repressed by capital? The human being has to be domesticated, shaped to a rationality which he must internalize — the rationality of the process of production of capital. Once this domestication is achieved, the human being is dispossessed of this repressed sensual life which becomes an object of knowledge, of science; it becomes capitalizable. The unconscious, becoming an object of commerce, is thinly sliced and retailed in the market of knowledge. The unconscious did not always exist, and it exists now only as a component in the

tion through displacement. Losing one's self in a maze meant precisely that, not merely a sense of disorientation. Bewilderment entailed an encounter with death and transcendence, and so was necessarily characterized by complex interacting responses, including terror, wonder and ecstasy. The wilderness overwhelmed the individual will from three directions. Spiritual techniques for arousing the coiled kundalini energy eroded ego boundaries and merged the individuated self within the cosmic All. Hallucinogens derived from poisonous substances transported the individual to the brink of physical deacease. And uncontrollable sexual desires overcame any social inhibitions placed on the search for erotic pleasures. The combination of these three elements took the individual to the edge of dissolution — as a psychological, physical, and social/ethical entity. But only to the edge: vestiges of consciousness remained so that the wilderness could become aware of itself, achieve a knowledge of its own awesome nature. However, the process remained reciprocal: the individual emerged transformed and whole, often bearing shamanic gifts — such as prophetic powers, healing capacities and visions — to enrich the community. Such symbiosis constituted the core of the ancient Mysteries.<sup>[4]</sup>

Once “wilderness” acquired pejorative connotations, however, the bewilderment phenomenon underwent a similarly negative redefinition. The originally integrated meanings of the process were separated and demonized, gradually assuming the forms in which they are currently known. On the one hand, bewilderment now signifies the feeling experienced when one is lost, disorientated in an unfamiliar — and hence potentially threatening — context or environment, unable to find an exit. On the other hand, the term denotes a derangement of perceptions, not in a positive sense of possession by the wilderness, but in the negative sense of perplexity and bafflement. To lose one's self now becomes an adversity because the failure of the cognitive faculties reveals, not a wealth of inner spiritual resources, but an emptiness — a subjectivity evacuated by power and glutted with totalitarian trivia.

These contemporary meanings of “bewilderment” are so ingrained that it seems an impossible task to retrieve this term. Hence, as an alternative I propose the notion of *bewilderness*. The primal meanings of “bewilder” are now apparent. The amalgamation of “bewilder” and “wilderness” in this new term possesses the advantage of restoring the emphasis on the wild component of the former term. But the addition of “ness” to “bewilder” also remains appropriate. Vest demonstrates that the suffix “ness,” in addition to expressing a particular state (e.g., sweetness, tiredness), originally denoted a “land” or “place.” Hence, as a term “bewilderness” reunites the two separated aspects of “bewilder” as geographical dislocation and as a spiritual condition.

The reasons for coining this neologism are far from antiquarian. The experience denoted by bewilderness remains crucial for all proponents of anarchy, who recognize that syncopating the spiral dance could facilitate total revolution. Bewilderness constitutes both the means and an end (i.e., the beginning of another cycle). Like anarchic Zen, it postulates a supersession of everyday, socially conditioned consciousness on an individual and later generalized scale. It promotes psychosocial biodegradation or ecdysis: the refusal of assigned identities, the divestment of polysemic integuments, the disgorgement of totalitarian toxins. Dispossession becomes Possession, not so much through an expropriation of the expropriators, as an evacuation of and from the evacuating control complex. This process is purgative and therapeutic: the vacuum becomes inundated with waves of ecstasy that prefigure, and hence promote the shift toward, total global anarchy. Techniques for recovering bewilderness are available. Many of Starhawk's magic exercises, for example, attempt to elicit precisely this condition. She pro-

novelist Tom Robbins has emphasized the question, “How do you make love stay?” We may well agree with Ecclesiastes (6:16) that “A faithful friend is the medicine of life,” but where are the friends? The marked decline in friendship in the U.S. in recent decades is well-documented (e.g. McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashears, *American Sociological Review*, June 2006).

And it is precisely here that radical theory fails, or fails even to show up. Why is it “desire” (or more alienated still, “seduction”, with Baudrillard) that is the focus, not love? As bell hooks reported, “When I talked of love with my generation, I found it made everyone scared” (*All About Love*, p. xix). Yet there's such a need for it in this desert of the spirit, our culture of mounting lovelessness.

The opposite of love isn't hate, by the way, but indifference, hallmark of postmodern cynicism and hipness. So far, all has knelt before productionist existence in the draining technoculture. But we need to summon the depth of relationship against the dominant depthlessness, wherein so very much is shifting and disposable. A key feature is love of the unrealized potential of affective actuality, both in ourselves and in others.

There are of course potential dead-ends and snares in the way. For example, the sexist assumptions that so often compromise romantic love in a patriarchal, male-defined culture. Or the frequently world-denying aspects of religious love, its tendency to retreat from authentic individuality in favor of a devouring identification that negates rather than accepts otherness.

If emotion is a behavior, love is certainly also an action as well as a basic mental process. It is a key to emotional growth and strength that should lead us into greater communion with the world. Love redeems and gives meaning, emphasizing grace and the gift. The gift as the opposite of a merciless present, as the right life.

Luce Irigaray expresses this ably: “The gift has no goal. No for. And no object. The gift—is given. Before any division into donor and recipient. Before any separate identities of giver and receiver. Even before the gift.”

To speak of what may be given can be a reminder of what has been taken away. In the 1950s Laurens van der Post encountered people who could carry all that they owned in one hand. He referred to “that wonderful Bushman laugh which rises sheer from the stomach, a laugh you never hear among civilized people” (*The Lost World of the Kalahari*, p. 244). What a feat, the erasure of such joy at being alive on the earth. Freud's psychoanalytic goal was to change neurotic misery into “normal” unhappiness; Lacan's was that the analyst learn to be as wretched as everyone else.

It is striking (e.g. Ronald Miller, *Facing Human Suffering*, 2004) how extremely rare is the mention of terms like suffering, anguish, sorrow in the literature of psychology. Such things are clearly of no real theoretical concern, merely symptoms to be classified under “less emotional” descriptions. Simone Weil went to the factories to understand suffering. The factories are still there, but the immiseration is arguably more generalized now in a more placeless, synthetic society. Elaine Scarry (*The Body in Pain*, 1985) saw torture as “a miniaturization of the world, of civilization” (p. 38). Post-traumatic stress disorder, originally diagnosed as stemming from combat trauma, is now very widely applied as a diagnosis; another commentary on the state of society which contains more everyday blows, even everyday atrocities. Chellis Glendinning's observation (1994) applies: personal trauma commonly reflects the trauma of civilization itself.

It is a commonplace that mental/emotional illness is the nation's leading health problem. And as Melinda Davis has observed (*The New Culture of Desire*, 2002, p. 66), “Anxiety is the black plague—and the common cold—of our days.” A helpful exercise, as I see it, is to put all of politics in terms of health, i.e. what in social life is healthy or unhealthy? Isn't this, after all, the bottom line?

The overall picture is indeed well-known. Anxiety and stress undermine the immune

system; as many as 50 percent who have an anxiety condition also suffer from major depression. The surge in anxiety occurs against the backdrop of a rise in depression across all industrialized countries (e.g. Pettit and Joiner, *Chronic Depression*, 2006). Interestingly, R.C. Solomon (*The Passions*, 1993, pp 62-63) sees depression as a "way of wrenching ourselves from the established values of our world." Along these lines the poet W.S. Merwin wrote, "And yet his grief is a great guide through this world. Even, perhaps, the surest of guides. As long as guides are needed." (in *Breathing On Your Own*, 2001, p. 192).

At the beginning of May 2008, several reports surfaced about the high incidence of chronic physical pain: almost 30 percent of the U.S. population is so afflicted. To go along with all the rest of it, from increasing numbers of random, rampage shootings to serious obesity now causing diabetes and heart disease in children; kids on behavior-modification drugs from infancy; mushrooming rates of asthma, autism, and allergies; parents killing their children; millions hooked on Viagra; tens of millions dependent on pharmaceuticals for sleep, etc. etc. The whole picture is increasingly pathological and frightening.

It is little wonder that we find tons of self-help books sold, an intense preoccupation with psychological well-being, and an endless pageant of emotional suffering on television and the internet. Notice the rather rapid transit of the succession of four best-selling magazines: *Life*, *People*, *Us*, and *Self*. The narrowing of perspective in an already individualistic society is obvious.

Christopher Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism* (1979) cited "a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage" in America (p. 74). Writing in 2008, Patricia Pearson concluded that we now inhabit "a state far colder than narcissism" (*A Brief History of Anxiety*, p. 127).

An always accommodating postmodern sensibility proclaims the end of a core self, in favor of a multiplicity of shifting roles to be played. As social ties wither, is there a core anything left? Dispersed, with the human touch as systematically disappearing as contact with nature, we fear being alone with ourselves. A diffused, distracted mode of life represses memories of suffering and longs for a caress.

What is Progress, aka Modernity? "It is the high residues of hazardous and potentially lethal chemicals inside your fat cells. It is you sitting inside and turning on the television or computer on a beautiful day. It is you shopping when you are depressed. It is the feeling you get that something is missing." (Kevin Tucker, "What is the Totality?") It is perhaps odd that Descartes, progenitor of modern alienation, identified wonder as the first of his six primitive passions in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649). Where is our capacity for genuine wonder in disenchanting society?

I can tell you that I am moved by the crickets' persevering song, their strong life-voice as summer shuts down in the Pacific Northwest. It is always a special joy to hear the geese migrating high above, their honking sounding to me like dogs softly barking way up there. There is no consciousness separate from an experienced object. What happens when all that is experienced is masses, commodities, images?

The waning of affect, as Jameson put it, as everything else that's alive wanes too. Can we really live meaningless (technified, non-enchanted, indirect) lives? What is vivid and immediate does not exist on a screen. How spiritually impoverished and lacking in vitality is this emotional culture. And what is on the horizon, if not still worse?

We know in what direction health lies. Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess, "Happiness is the deferred fulfillment of a prehistoric wish. That is why wealth brings so little happiness" (January 16, 1898). Simplicity contains everything and in simplicity all is present. Albert Camus (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, p. 172) hit this note well: "I grew up with the sea and poverty for me was sumptuous; then I lost the sea and found all luxuries gray and poverty unbearable."

as the notion of the wilderness was forced to abandon its positive meanings and acquire negative connotations, the originally unified meaning of "bewilder" was divided into two partial definitions, whose connotations were then inverted. Wilderness, as Vest avers, simultaneously denoted a location and a condition: a state inhabited by willful, uncontrollable natural energies. In such states,<sup>[2]</sup> humans surrendered their individuality, renounced personal volition to the will-of-the-land, and merged individuated desire within the expansive needs of the wild. In doing so, they became channels or mediums through which the wilderness could become articulate and operative in the human sphere. The process was ecstatic: the surrender of the ego; the merging of individuation within holism, produced sensations of bliss and promoted ecstatic/erotic actions. Any incipient characterological sclerosis, absorbed through prolonged participation in communal relations, was discarded or dissipated. Any tendencies toward the formation of Leviathanic structures were thus dispersed.

Individuals undergoing this process were bewildered, in the original, integrated sense of the term. They entered "pathless places" in two senses. First, wilderness areas (i.e., the vast totality of the world) contained no paths or tracks — neither the roads of imperial domination and plunder constructed by the Romans, nor the routes of commerce carved by Islamic merchants. By definition, the wilderness remained free from incursions by technology. And secondly, there were no established journeys to be undertaken, no predetermined paths to traverse. All social codes were annulled: vision, emotion and behaviour were no longer subject to regulation and control. Total transformation was possible. But the directions — for unlimited eversion were no longer, or only minimally, under individual control. The individual will, subsumed within the will-of-the-land, no longer retained the power of volition. Possessed by the wilderness, individuals eagerly became vehicles for its sacred and ecstatic expression.

Evidence to substantiate these contentions regarding the bewilderment process can be derived from a consideration of an associated term, "amazement." The OED variously defines "amaze" as "to put out of one's wits... bewilder, perplex," "to overcome with sudden fear or panic," and "to overwhelm with wonder, to astound or greatly astonish." It also defines "amazedness" as "loss of self-possession through fear." This cluster of ideas clearly parallels the meanings attached to "bewilder." Indeed, they may ultimately derive from a common origin. The OED notes that "amaze and a maze were often identified." And this etymological link provides the crucial connexion. In certain primal traditions, the maze or labyrinth played a homologous role to that of the sacred wilderness area — in fact, the two may have been indistinguishable:

Extremely complex ideas were expressed through the symbol of the labyrinth. First, the initiate had to find the way through the underworld -the womb of the Mother -going through symbolic death to be reborn through her on a larger psychic level. Simultaneously, by dancing the winding and unwinding spiral', the initiate reached back to the still heart of cosmos, and so immortality, in her. The dance would have been combined with sexual rites and the taking of some hallucinogen like the legendary soma. In the resulting illumination soma and self were experienced as one with the cosmic self in orgasmic ego-death. The ecstatic centre of the labyrinth was the no-mind centre of orgasm experienced as death, creative madness, and loss of the conditioned 'self.'<sup>[3]</sup>

"Bewilderment" and "amazement" once denoted the experienced interiority of radical purifica-

# Anarchy and Ecstasy

## Chapter 4: Bewilderness

By John Moore

In an important article, Jay Vest convincingly demonstrates that the words “will” and “wild” derive from a common etymological root. For primal Europeans, nature was pervaded by a will force that remained beyond their power to influence. What nature autonomously willed became identified as wild.

Wilderness then means ‘self-willed-land’ or ‘self-willed-place’ with an emphasis upon its own intrinsic volition... This ‘willed’ conception is itself in opposition to the controlled and ordered environment, which is characteristic of the notion of civilization. While control, order, domination and management are true of civilization and domestication, they are not essentials of primal culture... Nature worship among primal Indo-Europeans evidences a traditional theme of sacred natural places, free from desecration by humans and their technology. Such sacred places were wilderness in the deepest sense; they were imbued with *will-force*, — willed, willful, uncontrollable — and with spirit. Thus, they held about them a sacred mystery — a numinous presence. It is from this tradition that the ‘will-of the-land’ — wilderness — concept emerges.<sup>[1]</sup>

Vest’s remarks recover important information, but remain curiously exteriorized. The contours of a spirituality structured around the recognition of a sacred wilderness — the significance of its symbolism and ritual — are skillfully outlined. But the interiority of this experience — what it felt like and what it meant to be immersed in such a wilderness — remains beyond Vest’s purview.

One reason for this deficiency may be the lack of an appropriate vocabulary. Vest’s article establishes that primal notions of wilderness are diametrically opposite to those operative in contemporary mainstream discourse. Archaic humans regarded the wilderness as a site of positive energies, whereas today power complexes demand that it be considered as a place of evil and negativity which deserves domination and exploitation. In *Against His-story. Against Leviathan!*, Fredy Perlman retraces the process whereby power — through authority structures, imperial and Judaeo-Christian civilizing forces — converts nature into a wasteland, thus forcing the term “wilderness” to acquire pejorative connotations. But the semantic history of a cognate term which denotes the interior experience of sacred wilderness — “bewilder” — has not received similar examination. Necessarily, this semantic reconstruction must be speculative. Contextual factors, however, indicate appropriate orientations for an accurate recovery of the term’s original meaning.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides two definitions of the verb “bewilder”: literally, “to lose in pathless places, to confound for want of a plain road,” and figuratively, “to confuse in mental perception, to perplex, confound, to cause mental aberration.” It is my contention that

# I EAT YOU, YOU EAT ME

by Smoke

**“Every creature born in the biological community of the earth belongs to that community. Nothing lives in isolation from the rest: nothing can live in isolation from the rest. Nothing lives only in itself, needing nothing from the community. Nothing lives only for itself, owing nothing to the community.”**

**-Daniel Quinn, “The Book of the Damned”**

The past deer season began much like those of previous years. I constructed a blind of branches and long grass stalks near the edge of the field, set back in the woods to blend in, while still offering a good view of the clearing.

Deer are primarily active in the half-light before dawn and during the fading light of dusk, spending much of the day resting in sheltered beds digesting food browsed in the morning and evening. If you want to be where the animals are, finding a food source (larder) is always a safe bet. In order to allow the woods to reach baseline (return to an undisturbed state), it is important for the hunter to wake early and be in the blind long before the sun peaks over the horizon. If the blind is well placed, the hunter can be sure to have plenty of opportunities to make meat.

Early the morning of opening day I crept to my blind, bundled against the cold, looking for the movement of deer making their way from the fields to their beds. Hunkering down, I watched and waited, allowing my senses to awaken to the place I had chosen. I heard the calls of a pair of cardinals as they hopped along from branch to branch. My body felt the cold of the ground, the bark of the tree that I rested against, and the slight breeze from the south. The scent of wood smoke filled my nostrils and I hoped it would mask my own odors from the sensitive noses of the deer.

*As the sun came peeking over the trees, it found me in my blind, motionless, my rifle resting against my legs. I hadn’t yet seen any deer, so I began to question my choice of location. Weeks earlier, I had chosen this place because I had seen deer here in the evenings, grazing their way slowly across the field.*

*Whether it was the direction of the wind drifting my scent to the noses of the deer or some other factor, I felt the deer were steering well clear of this place. If the deer wouldn’t come to me, then I would have to go to them. I took one more look around, slowly rose from the blind, and began to move up the hollow.*

Stalking quietly through the woods is an important skill for anyone wanting to experience animals undisturbed, in their natural habitat. In the case of the hunter, a skillful stalk can mean the difference between meat and going home empty-handed. Stalking requires much of the hunter’s body, and can seem too slow for our civilized minds, which tend to lose focus quickly as abstract images and unrelated thoughts fly through our brains.

Stopping at the edge of the woods and quieting one’s mind can do wonders for experiencing the forest as a place you belong. Being present and fully here is experienced as a matter of course by indigenous peoples across the globe. We who are alienated from our-



selves, others, and our environment need to take time to be still and to adjust to another, slower, but infinitely more complex rhythm.

A technique for moving quietly through the woods is called fox-walking (there is also a more rapid form called weasel-walking). For this the stalker lifts their feet and comes down on the outside of the foot, near the toes, settling the pad and then the heel of the foot into the surface of the ground. Feeling your way through the woods in this manner, your eyes are free to scan the area in front of you, noting obstacles that may cause noise. Crackling dry leaves, sticks, and loose rocks, can all signal other creatures that something isn't quite right and will cause them to direct their senses to that area.

As you stalk, it is beneficial to broaden your field of vision to the expanse of the forest, looking between the trees for the flash of movement and color that means deer. It is also important to use your other senses as well as sight: touch, smell, taste, and hearing all have their place in the hunt.

I slowly made my way to a meadow I knew deer frequented, being sure to approach from downwind so that the sensitive noses of the deer wouldn't catch my scent. I stopped often, forcing myself to stillness and awareness. Up ahead I could see that the ground rose up just before the tree line and so I made sure to keep from silhouetting myself against the horizon. Slingshotting my rifle across my back, I crouched low and began to crawl, picking my way across the forest floor.

Some hunters experience what they call "buck fever" when they see antlered deer. This can mean an elevated heart rate and rapid breathing, which can cause shakiness and poor aim, which could result in a wounded animal. The importance of knowing your gun or bow and making a calm, proficient shot cannot be stressed enough. This can only come through intentional repetition and practice. Many hunters with trophies in mind shoot at running animals or take hurried shots in their excitement. Hunting born of necessity is a completely different, more full experience. Cultivating a spirit that is neither bloodthirsty nor timid is integral to the sharing of that experience.

The family of deer grazed across the meadow as I watched them from the patch of briars that I had crawled to. There were seven of them; four does, two yearlings, and a young buck. I had already decided to take a doe that year and so I watched and waited for the right one. They were a beautiful family, full of life and playing with one another as they filled their bellies. It became evident that one of the does did not have a fawn with her, but I would need to wait until another day in order to be sure. I fixed the doe's markings in my mind and quietly moved back down the trail.

I would find and watch this herd of deer again and again, at dusk and dawn for four more days. They were careful to enter the clearing from downwind so that any threats could be smelled and avoided. I came to respect the deer and learned to see them as individuals with their own personalities and dispositions.

Although the idea of shooting a buck with a "huge rack" appeals to most hunters, taking a doe can sometimes be better for the health of a deer herd, especially when the doe has been selected by a thoughtful hunter. The role of the hunter as predator carries enormous responsibility: to ensure that future generations will be able to live in that place, that the place that you are taking from is replenished and helped to thrive, and to listen to the quieter voices of that place and its inhabitants.

also refer to the source of justice, God. These words have a significance that hearkens back to the origins of The Fall. Perhaps most interestingly the root of the words "tsedeq" and "tsedaqah" is the word "tsadaq" which means "to make right." This word is used throughout the Book of Job (17 times). It's relevant to note that at the end of Job's quest it's an encounter with wild nature that shows him the justice he's searching for. Much like justice, the well known Hebrew word for peace, shalom, has a much deeper meaning than the shallow connotations it's usually given (peace as a time when the country is not at war for example). As a noun, shalom refers to health and completeness. The root of shalom means "to be whole", echoing the emphasis on origins we see with the root word for justice, "to make right." When one meditates on the origins of fragmentation and disharmony from a biblical perspective we're forced to look at the Fall into Civilization chronicled in Genesis. If we're seeking to make things right and whole we need to have a serious understanding of what constitutes wrong and how it can be righted. If the concept of sin is broadened from a narrow emphasis on personal piety, to an understanding closer to it's basic meaning "to miss the mark" perhaps Christians will have a better framework for right and wrong. Within this understanding sin could be seen as that which moves us further away from the original wholeness of creation. Anything that works to perpetuate the movement away from the original vision of wholeness "peace", is not seeking to make things right "just" and it would therefore be missing the mark "sin." So we see in the roots of these words a radical call to resist the domesticating progress of civilizing projects. If the Peace and Justice movement were to move towards this more biblical understanding of peace and justice they'd be forced to face up to the fact that these words are only understood in their entirety when placed within the context of origins. An understanding of the original wild creation as peaceful and just would force Christian Leftists to shift their focus away from reformist projects towards resistance which undercuts the foundations of civilization. Property is one of those foundations.

Property destruction is most often a non-hierarchical/ relatively unorganized event at protests around the world. The resistance around the Paris suburbs a few years ago is a prime example of how property destruction and lack of formal organizational structure tend to go together. Leftists can't stand the idea of organizational structure not trumping all individual aims and means. And this is one of the main conflicts between anarchists and Leftists, anarchists don't have faith in The Bill of Rights or Constitutional Amendments or Lobbying Congress for Justice and Peace. And that's where Leftist aims and anarchist aims come into conflict. Leftists see protests as a way to address socio-political issues (one issue at a time) that demand reform. Anarchists tend to view protests as a way to disrupt the day to day business of police states, capital etc... These types of disruption take away strength from the organizational structure Leftists crave so anarchists are viewed as a threat. Property destruction and anything else that isn't "part of the script" takes away from the legitimacy the Left craves from those in power to enact it's projects of social reform (one issue at a time). Another way to put it is like this.. Race, Class and Gender issues are not fundamentally separate issues for anarchists and they hold no hierarchy of value, the totality of oppressive institutions and structures is what anarchists target in theory and action. Most importantly, an anarchist approach doesn't have faith in reform. While I empathize with the desire to avoid physical confrontation, I will not take the side of the powers that perpetuate institutional violence which continues every moment.. largely unnoticed. To vilify those who smash windows, un-arrest friends and destroy institutions of terror is to take the side of the oppressor. It is to join in collaboration with the realm of the demonic. To take the side of the Left is to run with the possessed pigs Jesus drives over the edge of the cliff. Leftists will continue to come up with excuses in order to support the demonic powers. Let us strive to cast out demons and send the pigs over the cliff once and for all.

Martin Luther King Jr. acting against oppressive systems of racism, Christianity flourishes when it's actively opposing power. What would stem from Christianity as a resistance movement to the unsustainable and pathological way of life we find ourselves in now? I hope we find out.

# CASTING OUT DEMONS: *DRIVING OUT THE LEGION OF THE LEFT*

By Andy Lewis

"Black clad anarchists mar protest." So begin the reports of multi-national media outlets from Portland, Oregon to Athens, Greece. Why is it that we've come to expect the outrage of supposed anarchists when "violent acts of property destruction" take place? The fear of physical violence towards another human being seems to loom large in the thoughts of many. And this is especially true for Christians questioning their role in resistance. Examples of Christians engaging in property destruction are few and far between even though Christ models this behavior, overturning tables and clearing the temple.

Regardless of intentions the end result of most supposed critiques relating to black blocs and other forms of anarchist resistance boils down to questions of moral piety and the defense of single issue organizational approaches. It's the latter that I argue holds most sway over would be anarchists. The Leftist approach demands a fragmented hierarchy of causes and an unwavering devotion to organizational structure. The conflict between single issue Leftists and anarchists stems from a fundamental difference of world view. Anarchists tend to see the issues of poverty and patriarchy (for example) as symptoms of a way of life (for some capitalism for others civilization and so on) that must be attacked at its roots. The Christian Left tends

to see these issues as part of a broader "peace and justice" movement which usually focuses on reforming the existing social systems.

Leftists generally have faith in democracy and reform. To the Christian Left the concepts of Peace and Justice are related to democracy and reform but also tend to take on spiritual/ faith based connotations which makes unraveling biblical notions of peace and justice necessary. The Hebraic words for "justice" or "righteousness" are "tsedeq" and "tsedaqah", male and female forms of the noun respectively. The words have legal and relational connotations, they can refer to the expectations of a person for God and vice versa. The legal connotations refer to the judicial process (the common leftist understanding of social- justice) but they



The deer came down the path to the meadow, moving quietly past the place where I sat, motionless, waiting for them to begin grazing on the grass beneath the trees. My hide was a growth of blackberry bushes with a few leaves still on them, providing good cover for me. There was no breeze to speak of, so the deer didn't catch my scent as they passed, thirty yards or more away. They stepped into the meadow and one by one began to graze. As I watched, each one of the deer would graze for twenty seconds or so and look up from their meal, in order to keep an eye out for threats. I picked out the doe I had chosen and watched her for a while longer. She was a beautiful creature, about three years old, middle age for a doe.

When alarmed or curious, whitetail deer give signs that communicate to the rest of the herd, elusive bucks, or hidden fawns that something is not quite right. These can be a loud snort/blowing sound, a stamping foot, or the flicking of a tail. The final, unmistakable signal is bounding away, usually to circle around or stop and listen for pursuit.

I raised my blackpowder rifle to my shoulder, using my knees as a rest for my elbows. Something changed then. She moved slowly out of the herd of deer, her eyes locked on me. I expected her to give an alarm, to snort or flick her tail, to stomp her foot. The alarm never came as she turned her side to me, offering herself and her life. It was a moment I will never forget.

Some indigenous peoples, living close to the land, tell stories of animals "giving" themselves to a particular hunter. The rightness of the hunt is unmistakable, a feeling in the heart, a knowing in the mind. It is to be at peace.

I squeezed the trigger. I watched her stumble, dying even as she fell. The other deer had run away at the report of the rifle and I reloaded even as I ran to her, ready to make another shot if needed. There was no need. My aim was true and she was still, a small bit of blood on her side. It was as good a death as I could give her. Laying my gun on the ground I knelt beside her, gathering her in my arms, begging forgiveness. "I know that I cannot replace what I have taken from you. Forgive me. I am just a man and my family needs food. We will eat your body and use your hide for clothing. We will not waste your life. When I die, my body will be buried in the forest. Grass will grow over it and your family will eat the grass. This is my promise." Her body sustained our family and our friends throughout the winter and spring.

Human beings can be a part of this web of life, finding themselves not as aliens and strangers to the earth, but as creatures that know and understand their role. This story is given by the earth itself, and cannot be wrestled from it or resisted without consequences. We need to hear the stories of the earth again.

**"Different stories: different lives. Different stories: different meanings. Different stories: different histories." (DQ)**

Different stories: different futures.

*"The undeniable ground ... is that we are animals in a world of seasons and rhythms which we have lost. Some wish to seek what was lost.*

*A god or master might say "Animal born into the seasons and the rhythms of light and darkness, you must remain cut off from these seasons and rhythms and be forever out of joint with the universe from which you have been born!"*

*A god or master who said that would be a tyrant and an enemy.*

*An animal disconnected from the earth and washed in alienation who surrendered to that alienation without a fight would be one to be pitied.*

*We don't want to play elf neo bullshit dress up. We want to touch the milieu our blood, our senses, our desires were born from. Smartest thing to do when you have taken a wrong to turn is to try to go back to the turn not taken. In this instance probably beyond our reach in any but the most inadequate of stumbling attempts. So what? What's here and now being drilled into us is surely without life.. Before the math, before the power narrative plays there was animal-ness coupled with the uniquely human qualities of celebration and imagination and wonder being affected by the rhythm of life.*

*Forever driven by the burden of proof and the need to scripturize our blood and our dreams we are drying up inside. The appeal to the peoples and the past is because the usual and expected god is so silent in the face of our need that god is either dead or somewhere unexpected."*

- Andrew Mandell



## RESISTING THE DOMESTICATORS

By Andy Lewis

The primal battle against domestication is being waged at every moment, even now. Anarchy and wildness flow through our veins, a part of us all as much as the air we breathe and the water we drink.

This spirit of wildness is systematically beaten out of us via domestication. Churches, schools, jobs, politicians, cops, these are the institutionalized motor for domestication in our daily lives. The domesticators seek to control, manipulate and ultimately to destroy that spirit which courses through all living beings. But when we join with the wild community of all God's good creation a kind of miracle takes place. At those moments we awaken with ears to hear and eyes to see like Jacob when he finds that wild creation is the gate of heaven.

It is in those moments that the life of quiet desperation dies. The threat of prison can no longer control us as all creation waits patiently and anxiously for us to join in communion. At those moments we may become aware of a great cloud of witnesses gathered around urging us on to liberation.

what we will eat and wear (Matthew 6:25-34), he tells us that the "kingdom of God is among [us]" (Luke 17:20-21), and says those who, "try to make their life secure will lose it, and those who lose their life will keep it" (Luke 17:33).

("Holy shit! What if He meant it?!")

Trying to accommodate Christianity to a 21<sup>st</sup> century civilized lifestyle is not the life Jesus offers. Christians are not meant to live conventional lifestyles. The first Jesus followers in the book of Acts claimed no "private ownership of possessions, but everything they owned was held in common," resulting in there being, "no needy person among them" (Acts 4:32-35). These are our roots as followers of Christ, roots we desperately need to return to.

And where does a critique of civilization fit into all of this?

Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus traveling on the fringes of society, often times retreating to the wilderness to spend time with God. John the Baptist lives a feral faith in the desert off of locusts and wild honey wearing clothes of camel's hair. The prophet Elijah traveled the wilderness doing as God directs of him. And the founding story of Judeo-Christianity, Genesis' narrative of The Fall, "reflect[s] on nothing less than civilization itself, and as such it narrates the history of the human condition" (*Cultural/Linguistic Diversity and Deep Social Ecology* (Genesis 11:1-9), Ched Myers). The story manifested in Genesis, reflects our roots as people thriving in creation with our Creator, then falling into a life of agriculture, suffering, and civilization as we try to be more like Him.

For the vast majority of human existence our ancestors were nomadic hunter-gatherers living rather egalitarian lives with limited wants and unlimited needs absent of guns, cars, poverty, many modern diseases, and everything that goes along with NOT having faith in the good creation for provision. But for 10,000 years, human history has been spiraling out of control into war, technology, environmental destruction, slavery, oppression, and the continuous neglect of all that is living (Fredy Perlman, Marshall Sahlins, John Zerzan).

Civilization is a continuous path of destruction, alienation, murder, theft, and a disregard for life that will eventually crash or destroy all life on the planet. And the deeper we travel down the rabbit hole of the critique of civilization, the more we find that civilization is incompatible with all that lives.

Anything incompatible with the living earth and the life it sustains is incompatible with a life in relationship with the Creator and with Jesus Christ.

Christianity, like anarcho-primitivism, was (and should be) a fringe dwelling resistance movement, a resistant movement that offers a way out of this Leviathan we currently find ourselves in both spiritually, and physically.

As Christians and people opposed to civilization we have a lot of shit on our plate. Many secular anarcho-primitivists don't want anything to do with us. Mainstream Christians will be more than reluctant to accept a critique of the system that sustains their comfort and current way of life. We're stuck in the middle, and even more, the middle is still civilized. Although we're in a tough spot, I believe we have the greatest access for liberation, both personally and communally. We have a solid, community of humble and passionate people (and music!) full of rage and mercy with the understanding that this mode of existence cannot continue. But most importantly we have God, His grace and teachings from Jesus that, when taken seriously, allow for complete liberation free of all anxiety and free from the fear of death!

For me, this means having the faith to let everything go and live out the kingdom of God, a kingdom not of civilization, but of something holy and wild. And this type of radical faith is complete liberation in this life. And in this liberation, in this way of living, we will show the civilized the glorious way of life that Jesus promised.

P.S-

Christianity has always been at its best as a resistance movement. From Jesus questioning and resisting the dominating system of power, to Dietrich Bonhoeffer opposing Nazi Germany, to

# I SPEAK ONLY FOR MYSELF

By Bucko Rinsky

My progression from a mild-mannered conservative to a mild-mannered anarcho-primitivist took place from my sophomore year to my senior year of high school. It was NOFX's song "Franco Un-American" that started it all:

*I never looked around, never second-guessed  
Then I read some Howard Zinn now I'm always depressed  
And now I can't sleep from years of apathy  
All because I read a little Noam Chomsky  
-Franco Un-American, NOFX*

I became addicted to books and floated around in a leftist/social justice critique for my sophomore and junior year of high school. Translated, this meant that I, a privileged male residing in America read into how screwed up everything is so that I can be a privileged male residing in America. During my senior year, I picked up Derrick Jensen and John Zerzan, and found the totality of critiques in the opposition to civilization to be the most appropriate response to how terribly messed up everything is.

During this time of mind expansion and knowledge accumulation I struggled with how I could be an anarchist and a Christian since they seemed to me at the time to be incompatible.

It was Jacques Ellul, Shane Claiborne, and Marcus J. Borg who put Christianity into a new perspective for me. The Christianity I grew up on, a religion of requirements that one believes to get into heaven was not "the Way" that reflected the life of Jesus. In fact, it was a subverted Christianity that gave birth, "to a society, a civilization, a culture that [is] completely opposite to what we read in the Bible, to what is indisputably the text of the law, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul" (*The Subversion of Christianity*, Ellul, p.3). Ellul offers many reasons, but he summarizes the main cause by saying that, "Subversion takes place, not because society is wicked, but because revelation is socially intolerable" (*The Subversion of Christianity*, p. 158).

The subversion also accounts for much of Christianities terrible history towards non-Christians and the earth. In *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*, Fredy Perlman offers a reason for the rise of the Roman Catholic Church saying that, "the Church gains power because it is Roman, not because it is Christian" (p.151). This statement applies to many historical accounts. Constantine lived as a civilized Roman emperor, not a follower of Christ. Spanish missionaries to the Americas lived as civilized Spaniard conquistadores, not followers of Christ. And many Americans continue to live as civilized Americans, not followers of Christ. Throughout history, Christians continually identify more with the death culture of civilization than with the life-affirming proclamations of Jesus Christ.

From reading Ellul (*Anarchy and Christianity, Subversion of Christianity*), Claiborne (*Jesus for President*), and Borg (*The Heart of Christianity*), I've come to understand more and more how Jesus' message is not only about personal transformation but social transformation through questioning and resisting power. Borg in his book, *The Heart of Christianity*, notes that, "we as Christians participate in the only major religious tradition whose founder was executed by established authority" (p. 91). In the Gospel of Luke we see Jesus' proclaimed mission to, "bring good news to the poor," "proclaim release to the captives," "recovery of sight to the blind," and to, "let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18). He continuously teaches against wealth and possessions (Luke 12:13-21, Luke 18:18-30), he commands us not to worry about our lives,

# Towards a Re-Wilding of the Mind: On Instinct, Loss & Renewal

Liza Menno Bloom

*"We tend to see our distant past through a reverse telescope that compresses it: a short time as hunter-gatherers, a long time as 'civilized' people. But civilization is a recent stage of human life and for all we know, it may not be any great achievement. It may not even be the final stage. We have been alive on this planet as recognizable humans for about two million years and for all but the last two or three thousand we've been hunter-gatherers. We may sing in choirs and park our rages behind a desk, but we patrol the world with many of a hunter-gatherer's drives, motives and skills."-Diane Ackerman, A Natural History of the Senses*

*"The wind told a story and everything understood, everything in the woods, but I could not understand. And I felt that I had lost something fine from an earlier age..."-The Illlogical Spoon*

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve God's will—God's good, pleasing and perfect will."-Romans 12:2*

I have long wondered about the possibility of living without civilization not in terms of whether people *want* it, but whether people *are capable* of it. Thinking about the evolution (or devolution) of the brain, for one thing, makes me question some of the boundaries that civilization has erected within us, boundaries or diversions beyond just the emotional and social ones. It was actually my mother who began me thinking about this. When I was in high school, we were in the car together and she was musing out loud: "If we had to survive now in the wild," she said, "we would be so poorly equipped. We are so dependent on these cars, on these stores...we are so *cushy*."

Well mom, in a way, you're right. When humans lived without civilization, their sensory receptors—determined by their brain make-up—were far more refined, equipping them to not only survive, but thrive in creation.

Stephen C. Cunnane, in his book on human brain evolution called *Survival of the Fattest*, says that gatherer-hunters had such finely-tuned olfactory sensors that they could not only detect the presence of food from far away, but could pick out what particular kind of food they wanted—what animal, tree, etc.—and where precisely to go to get it. Now, the majority of us have olfactory sensors that are so clogged with and deadened by perfume and smog that they couldn't smell their way to the cereal aisle in the grocery store, not to mention to a specific fruit tree in the forest.

My interest here, though, is not so much in what we (as a species) have lost, but what we *retain*, instinct-wise, and how we are (mis-)using it.

Through anthropology, we know that humans used to live much more closely to non-human animals—physically and relationally. With domestication came anthropocentrism and the human-animal binary. However, we still see the need/desire of humans to commune with non-human animals. Social critic John Berger, for example, notes the rise of stuffed animals as toys in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century during the industrial revolution and the growth of cities, i.e.-moves away from the natural world. Now, of course, stuffed animals are an absolute given in any modern child's bedroom or fast food happy meal. Berger says that stuffed animals "address our lone-



liness as a species" and signify the presence of an instinct or desire within us that remains from an earlier age, but is unrequited in this one.

Another hang-over instinct from our collective memory of nomadic times is the general delight that people take in high spaces. People build skyscrapers and will pay exorbitant amounts of money for the penthouse apartment or office. You can see it too in children's propensity for tree climbing. Elaine Brooks, among others, attributes this to the fact that we are still biologically and genetically programmed as hunter-gatherer nomads and identifies it as a protective instinct from our days as potential prey. When being chased by a predator, a tree or other high place provided safety, respite and a strategic view of your pursuer. The relief of being high up out of the path of the predator, the rapid slowing of heart-rate and subsequent relaxation translates into pleasure and still occurs within most humans when in high places (excluding acrophobics).

Furthermore, Cunnane argues that *imprintability*—the ability of infants to learn certain responses and distinguish between highly-nuanced sensory stimulants—is "hard-wired" into humans and primates, as something like deep memory, or instinct. Humans and primates can, through imprintability, catalogue countless species of plants and animals and recognize their mother by her smell alone. However, in many cases, animals that have been domesticated and separated from their group will imprint genetically-unrelated or inanimate objects as *mother*.

I see this last example as a sort of metonym for our situation now. We (domesticated human animals) are still capable of imprintability—it is, as Cunnane says "hard-wired" into us—but, lacking regular significant interaction with our land base or "group" (as it were)—we imprint totally meaningless things. Life-less objects become pale replacements for the life, the connections, we would like to have stamped within us. We can recognize hundreds of different car models, call them by name, we can distinguish between the subtleties of shoe designs, but we don't know what plants we can eat, or which animals to avoid. We still have the capabilities, but we are wasting them on vacuousness, the mirages of civilization.

As we study and critique civilization, it is important to recognize that it is more than just social theory or even theology: that our very physiology is susceptible to its poison, just as our very cells are no longer impervious to the ever-expanding tentacles of corporate privatization and patenting. Yes, the landscape of our mind, the tenor of our spirit, along with the actual configuration of our brain cells has been altered by the carceral archipelago of civilization and its demands.

I believe that we have gotten our (collective, civilized) selves into this mess in large part through practice—we have practiced buying things, staying inside, watching TV, practiced submitting to bureaucracies, obeying false gods. Most of us no longer need governments or power structures coercing us into domestication; we are practiced enough that now we domesticate and regulate ourselves. Therefore, it seems that practice must play a part in getting us out. This is where re-wilding can be very, well, practical.

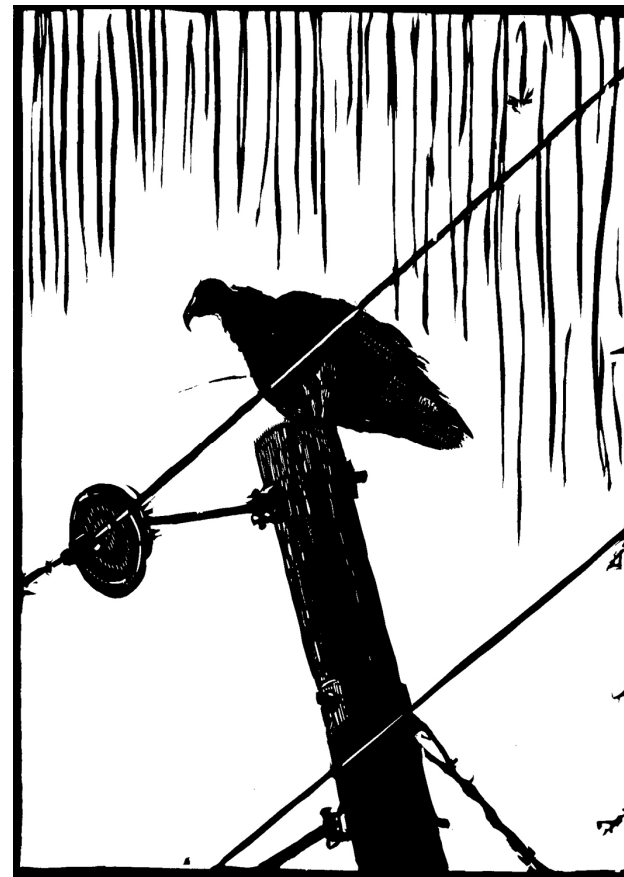
Practice it. Learn the plants that live around you, learn about your animal neighbors, learn about your body. Cunnane notes, "Successful hunting takes time and practice so, even when stimulated by hunger, few humans without considerable experience can successfully trap or kill an animal for food. Hunting is a learned skill, but not under the duress of imminent hunger or starvation." Again, if you want to be able to feed yourself, practice feeding yourself (the same goes for gathering, all you vegans out there).

Having said that, I suggest that we need to conceptualize re-wilding in much broader terms. Beyond learning skills that will allow us a certain degree of freedom from governments and centralized (but constellation-like, far-reaching) power structures, we must re-wild our

questioning them, struggling with them. The Hebrew Bible is not a set of finished stories and unchanging laws; it is not a static body of dogmatic truths but a living enigma that must be questioned, grappled with, and interpreted afresh in every generation. For, as it is said, the guidance that the Torah can offer in one generation is very different from that which it waits to offer in another.

This ongoing tradition of textual interpretation and commentary, and of commentary upon earlier commentary, has given rise to the numerous postbiblical texts of the Jewish tradition, from the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the collections of midrash, to the Zohar and other Kabbalistic works. Collectively, all these texts are known as the 'Oral Torah,' since they all originated in oral discussion and commentary upon the 'Written Torah,' upon the teachings ostensibly revealed to Moses, the first Jewish scribe, atop Mount Sinai. The process of writing down oral commentaries and interpretations, with the intent of preserving them, began in the second or third century C.E.

The first of such compilations, the Talmud, is today printed with the primary layer of text, the Mishnah, in the center of each page, and with subsequent commentaries upon that text arrayed around it—in successive layers, as it were. Thus, in its visible arrangement the Talmud displays a sense of the written text not as a definitive and finished object but as an organic, open-ended process to be entered into, an evolving being to be confronted and engaged.



## FIRE

We talk of fires  
Ones that purify  
Yet remind our children that  
Fire is not a toy  
And not to get too close

We hedge in and contain  
In grills of metal  
In ovens of brick  
In kilns of clay

We desire  
And pay homage to  
An all-consuming fire  
Yet continue to build fires  
That merely smolder and  
smoke

Afraid, perhaps  
That if we were to build them  
Wild  
And  
Raging

That something might actually  
Burn.

- Jared Himstedt

be read, they had to be added to, enspirited by the reader's breath. The invisible air, the same mystery that animates the visible terrain, was also needed to animate the visible letters, to make them come alive and to speak. The letters themselves thus remained overtly dependent upon the elemental, corporeal life-world—they were activated by the very breath of that world, and could not be cut off from that world without losing all of their power. In this manner the absence of written vowels ensured that Hebrew language and tradition remained open to the power of that which exceeds the strictly human community—it ensured that the Hebraic sensibility would remain rooted, however tenuously, in the animate earth. (While the Hebrew Bible would become, as we have seen, a kind of portable homeland for the Jewish people, it could never entirely take the place of the breathing land itself, upon which the text manifestly depends. Hence the persistent themes of exile and longed-for return that reverberate through Jewish history down to the present day.)

The absence of written vowels in ancient Hebrew entailed that the reader of a traditional Hebrew text had to actively *choose* the appropriate breath sounds or vowels, yet different vowels would often vary the meaning of the written consonants (much as the meaning of the consonantal cluster 'RD,' in English, will vary according to whether we insert a long *o* sound between those consonants, 'RoAD'; or a long *i* sound, 'RiDe'; a short *e* sound, 'ReD'; or a long *e* sound, 'ReAD'. The reader of a traditional Hebrew text must actively choose one pronunciation over another, according to the fit of that meaning within the written context, yet the precise meaning of that context would itself have been determined by the particular vowels already chosen by that reader.

The traditional Hebrew text, in other words, overtly demanded the reader's conscious participation. The text was never complete in itself; it had to be actively engaged by a reader who, by this engagement, gave rise to a particular reading. Only in relation—only by being taken up and actively interpreted by a particular reader—did the text become meaningful. And there was no single, definitive meaning; the ambiguity entailed by the lack of written vowels ensured that diverse readings, diverse shades of meaning, were always possible.

Some form of active participation, as we have seen, is necessary to *all* acts of phonetic reading, whether of Greek, or Latin, or English texts such as this one. But the purely consonantal structure of the Hebrew writing system rendered this participation—the creative interaction between the reader and the text—particularly conscious and overt. It simply could not be taken for granted, or forgotten. Indeed, the willful engagement with the text that was necessitated by the absence of written vowels lent a deeply *interactive* or *interpretive* character to the Jewish community's understanding of its own most sacred teachings. The scholar Barry Holtz alludes to this understanding in his introduction to a book on the sacred texts of Judaism:

We tend usually to think of reading as a passive occupation, but for the Jewish textual tradition, it was anything but that. Reading was a passionate and active grappling with God's living word. It held the challenge of uncovering secret meanings, unheard-of explanations, matters of great weight and significance. An active, indeed interactive, reading was their method of approaching the sacred text called Torah and through that reading process of finding something at once new and very old...

By "interactive" I mean to suggest that for the rabbis of the tradition, Torah called for a living and dynamic response. The great texts in turn are the record of that response, and each text in turn becomes the occasion for later commentary and interaction. The Torah remains unendingly alive because the readers of each subsequent generation saw it as such, taking the holiness of Torah seriously, and adding their own contribution to the story. For the tradition, Torah *demand*s interpretation.

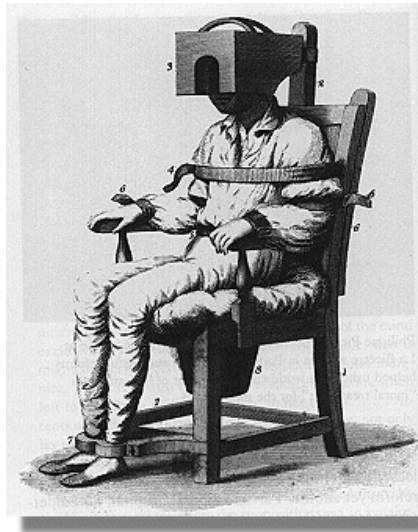
The reader, that is, must actively respond to the Torah, must bring his own individual creativity into dialogue with the teachings in order to reveal new and unsuspected nuances. The Jewish people must enter into dialogue with the received teachings of their ancestors,

minds, our very spirits—must reverse the self-domesticating flow that our civilized ways, domesticating religions and gluttonous consumerist practices have set in motion.

There is no shortage of challenges to such a charge. Indigenous people who *are* trying with all that they have, in this moment, to remain in close communion with creation and to practice an undomesticated land-based spirituality and lifeway, are being assaulted from all sides. Many in this country are being violently relocated away from the land that they belong to *as we speak*. Beyond the fact that they're being forcefully relocated so an elite few can make money, I see this attempt to separate people from their land as a deeper move to sever some powerful connection with the spirit that those humans have not lost, a connection that, as proponents of civilization know and deeply fear, could explode the beast, belly first.

Derrick Jensen is fond of saying, "Dismantle globally, renew locally." I assume that he is talking about dismantling infrastructure and technology and renewing bio-regions. But how do we first dismantle the civilization within us and renew or re-wild our minds?

I want to be cognizant of the cyclical nature of dismantling and renewing. While I think that there is certainly value in Jensen's slogan, how do we ensure that if we are dismantling, we have something within ourselves that has already been renewed or re-wilded? Something like a mind, a spirit, senses....



This is imperative if those of us trying to practice an undomesticated spirituality are to materialize the liberatory, already-but-not-yet world/kingdom/lifeway that we hold in our hearts and minds after this civilization implodes under its own weight, and ensure that we don't simply reproduce domesticating systems, oppressive hierarchies and false binaries that for so long have deafened human animals to the spirit's urgings and the messages of non-human life. In other words: how, when this civilization crashes (like every other civilization before it), do we keep from building one more civilization on which to depend? Not to mention continuing the competitive, racist and misogynist socialization that has been being massaged into most of us since before our cognitive faculties were fully developed?

How is this not a hopelessly impossible task?

There is more nuance than I am setting out here—when civilization crashes it will probably not look like the blank slate presented in Hollywood movies or Cormac McCarthy novels. We might not even use the word *crash* for what happens. We might have to invent a whole new language for what happens. Or learn an old one. But I think that as people attempting to connect our minds, bodies and spirits in a struggle to recognize and resist the disease of civilization and to move toward total emancipation we can play a powerful and prophetic role in envisioning and actualizing what comes next.

But to do this, we must begin to understand, *to help each other understand*, what it means to no longer conform to the pattern of this civilization and to re-wild our minds, to recognize what instincts remain intact within us and resurrect them, reclaim them for their intended purpose—to help us live on this earth as we were intended. I *hope* that we can *practice* this and that we can, therefore, practice hope.

# THE DOMESTICATION OF ORIGINS

## THE CATASTROPHE OF GOD ORDAINED AGRARIANISM

By Andy Lewis

Subsistence agriculture and sheep herding was the way of life for those living in the Mediterranean hill country so it's hardly a surprise this mixed economy is referenced throughout the Hebrew Bible and to a lesser extent in the New Testament. These themes are inescapable because they were the life way of those who would pass down the stories and histories that would become the Hebrew narrative.

While biblical scholar Ted Hiebert sees agrarianism as the original preference and desire being expressed in Genesis, a sort of God ordained farm with Adam the farmhand and domesticated animals to help with crop production. This myopic view is shallow at best and ethically bankrupt at its core. Hiebert's Wendell Berry inspired agritopian reading portrays an ultra domesticated view of God as the one who is moulded by human will to pronounce divine blessing on projects of hierarchy, control and domination. To be clear, agriculture is the ground in which patriarchy, warfare and all subsequent estrangements from egalitarian life ways find their root. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of a God ordained agrarianism is just how easily this aligns with a whole host of agrarian Gods found throughout the Ancient Near East. The stories of these Gods point to agriculture as a divinely inspired project initiated by a hungry authoritarian God who wants to be fed. Within this worldview humans are little more than divinely domesticated farmers and herders, charged with the task of carrying out a program of widespread domestication/ control.

Echoes of these agrarian roots of Yahweh have been perpetuated for a long time so it's disappointing to see this tired old starry eyed agritopian vision trotted out as some sort of ecologically redeeming biblical worldview. Wendell Berry has become so synonymous with the greening of Christianity over the past decade that it barely merits mentioning. And that's part of the problem. Agriculture is agriculture and the ecological/ social consequences stem from this practice whether it's Wendell Berry's small scale version or Monsanto's 21<sup>st</sup> century genetic manipulating horror show. I'm not saying Berry's version is anywhere near as devastating as the monoculture/ agribusiness version but the two are related and the consequences of domestication are embedded in both, the agribusiness version is just further along in the process. Agriculture is not the biblical vision/ preference.

Norman Gottwald provides a constructive alternative to the idea of biblically ordained agriculture by way of the implications in his book *The Tribes of Yahweh*. Gottwald delves into historic, social and economic implications related to ancient Israel's tribalism. But before we get into the causes and effects of tribalism in Ancient Israel let's look at Tribes in general and balance this social structure against bands, the foundational social structure for the majority of human history.

Band Society is marked by groups of 15-40 people moving frequently throughout a bio-region. Social stresses are alleviated easily due to the ease with which people can move from one band to another when tensions arise. Physical confrontations are rare. The nomadic element of this social structure ensures that carrying capacity isn't exceeded and the land base isn't forced into production. The lack of sedentary horticultural practices also helps to alleviate the growth of surplus and the growth of specialists( advanced division of labor) which are two of the primary contributors to rigid hierarchical structures and warfare. Egalitarianism is synonymous with band society and nomadic hunting/ gathering.

"The Hadza, like many other nomadic people, value movement highly and individuals and

such anachronistic notions as the belief in an otherworldly heaven and hell, or a faith in the immateriality and immortality of the personal soul. Yet such dualistic notions have no real place in the Hebrew Bible. Careful attention to the evidence suggests that ancient Hebraic religiosity was far more corporeal, and far more responsive to the sensuous earth, than we commonly assume."

--*The Spell of the Sensuous*, page 240

"The power of this relationship may be directly inferred from the very structure of the Hebrew writing system, the *aleph-beth*. This ancient alphabet, in contrast to its European derivatives, had no letters for what we have come to call 'the vowels.' The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew *aleph-beth* were all consonants. Thus, in order to read a text written in traditional Hebrew, one had to infer the appropriate vowel sounds from the consonantal context, and add them when sounding out the written syllables.

This lack of written vowels is only partly explained by the morphological structure of the Semitic languages, in which words with the same combination of consonants (usually grouped in clusters of three) tend to have a related meaning. This morphology ensured that a person fluent in the Hebrew language could, with effort, correctly decipher a Hebrew text without the aid of written vowels. Nevertheless, additional letters for vowels would have greatly facilitated the reading of ancient Hebrew. The fact that some later Hebrew scribes, taking their lead from a standard practice of the Aramaeans, occasionally used the consonants *H*, *W*, and *Y* to suggest specific vowel sounds, is evidence that the lack of written vowels was indeed felt as difficulty. When, in the seventh century C.E., vowel indicators in the form of little dots and dashes inserted below and above the letters were finally introduced into Hebrew texts, the usefulness of those marks made them a standard component of many Hebrew texts thereafter.

Another, perhaps more significant, reason for the absence of written vowels in the traditional *aleph-beth* has to do with the nature of the vowel sounds themselves. While consonants are those shapes made by the lips, teeth, tongue, palate, or throat, that momentarily obstruct the flow of breath and so give form to our words and phrases, the vowels are those sounds that are made by the unimpeded breath itself. *The vowels, that is to say, are nothing other than sounded breath.* And the breath, for the ancient Semites, was the very mystery of life and awareness, a mystery inseparable from the invisible *ruach*—the holy wind or spirit. The breath, as we have noted, was the vital substance blown into Adam's nostrils by God himself, who thereby granted life and consciousness to humankind. It is possible, then, that the Hebrew scribes refrained from creating distinct letters for the vowel-sounds in order to avoid making a visible representation of the invisible. To fashion a visible representation of the vowels, of the sounded breath, would have been to concretize the ineffable, *to make a visible likeness of the divine.* It would have been to make a visible representation of a mystery whose very essence was to be invisible and hence unknowable—the sacred breath, the holy wind. And thus it was not done.

Of course, we do not know if the thought of imaging the vowels, or the sounded breath, even occurred to the ancient Semitic scribes; it is entirely possible that their reverent relation to the wind and the air—their sense of the sacredness of this element that lends its communicative magic to all spoken utterances—simply precluded such a notion from even arising. In any case, whether the avoidance of vowel notation was conscious or inadvertent, the absence of written vowels marks a profound difference between the ancient Semitic *aleph-beth* and the subsequent European alphabets.

For example, unlike texts written with the Greek or the Roman alphabets, a Hebrew text simply could not be experienced as a double—a stand-in, or substitute—for the sensuous, corporeal world. The Hebrew letters and texts were not sufficient unto themselves; in order to

but solely to a gesture to be made by the human mouth. There is a concerted shift of attention away from any outward or worldly reference of the pictorial image, away from the sensible phenomenon that had previously called forth the spoken utterance, to the shape of the utterance itself, now invoked directly by the written character. *A direct association is established between the pictorial sign and the vocal gesture, for the first time completely bypassing the thing pictured.* The evocative phenomena—the entities imaged—are no longer a necessary part of the equation. Human utterances are now elicited, directly, by human-made signs; *the larger, more-than-human life-world is no longer a part of the semiotic, no longer a necessary part of the system.*

Or is it? When we ponder the early Semitic *aleph-beth*, we readily recognize its pictographic inheritance. *Aleph* is also the ancient Hebrew word for “ox.” The shape of the letter, we can see, was that of an ox’s head with horns; turned over, it became our own letter A. The name of the Semitic letter *mem* is also the Hebrew word for “water”; the letter, which later became our own letter M, was drawn as a series of waves: . The letter *ayin*, which also means “eye” in Hebrew, was drawn as a simple circle, the picture of an eye; it is this letter, made over into a vowel by the Greek scribes, that eventually became our letter O. The Hebrew letter *qoph*, which is also the Hebrew term for “monkey,” was drawn as a circle intersected by a long, dangling, tail. Our letter Q retains a sense of this simple picture.

These are a few examples. By thus comparing the names of the letters with their various shapes, we discern that the letters of the early *aleph-beth* are still implicitly tied to the more-than-human field of phenomena. But these ties to other animals, to natural elements like water and waves, and even to the body itself, are far more tenuous than in the earlier, predominantly nonphonetic scripts. These traces of sensible nature linger in the new script only as vestigial holdovers from the old—they are no longer necessary participants in the transfer of linguistic knowledge. The other animals, the plants, and the natural elements—sun, moon, stars, waves—are beginning to lose their own voices. In the Hebrew Genesis, the animals do not speak their own names to Adam; rather, they are *given* their names by this first man. Language, for the Hebrews, was becoming a purely *human* gift, a human power.

It was only, however, with the transfer of phonetic writing to Greece, and the consequent transformation of the Semitic *aleph-beth* into the Greek “alphabet,” that the progressive abstraction of linguistic meaning from the enveloping life-world reached a type of completion. The Greek scribes took on, with slight modifications, both the shapes of the Semitic letters and their Semitic names. Thus *aleph*—the name of the first letter, and the Hebrew word for “ox”—became *alpha*; *beth*—the name of the second letter, as well as the word for “house”—became *beta*; *gimel*—the third letter, and the word for “camel,” became *gamma*, etc. But while the Semitic names had older, nongrammatological meanings for those who spoke a Semitic tongue, the Greek versions of those names had no nongrammatological meaning whatsoever for the Greeks. That is, while the Semitic name for the letter was also the name of the sensorial entity commonly imaged by or associated with the letter, the Greek name had no sensorial reference at all. While the Semitic name had served as a reminder of the worldly origin of the letter, the Greek name served only to designate the human-made letter itself. The pictorial (or iconic) significance of many of the Semitic letters, which was memorialized in their spoken names, was now readily lost. The indebtedness of human language to the more-than-human perceptual field, an indebtedness preserved in the names and shapes of the Semitic letters, could now be entirely forgotten.

Pt.2 “We moderns tend to view ancient Hebraic culture through the intervening lens of Greek and Christian thought; even Jewish scholarship, and much contemporary Jewish self-understanding, has been subtly influenced and informed by centuries of Hellenic and Christian interpretation. It is only thus that many persons today associate the ancient Hebrews with

groups move to satisfy the slightest whim. Their possessions are so few and are so easily carried that movement is no problem.... Because the Hadza do not join in groups to assert exclusive rights over portions of land, or other property, because they do not unite to defend either resources or their own persons, because they cooperate very little with each other in their subsistence tasks, there is little to bind individuals to specific other individuals. People do depend on obtaining meat from other people, but they are entitled to a share of meat simply by being in a particular camp at a time when a large animal is killed there and do not have to rely on specific categories of kin or other specific individuals to supply them.” –James Woodburn (*Stability and Flexibility in Hadza Residential Groupings*)

Tribes allow for militarization, this seems to be the main reason for Israel’s tribalism, their status as oppressed people surrounded by hostile neighbors. Self-preservation, strength in numbers, Tribalism allows for a more complex social structure composed of laws, hierarchy, chiefs, big men etc (the Book of Judges is a Biblical example of this), but this is in no way the original preference. It is a concession. This is the point Hiebert and the agrarian agenda misses completely, While Yahweh is interacting with farmers, Yahweh is not ordaining agriculture, domestication or the resulting warfare, patriarchy, and civilized death urge which go along with it.

As Gottwald puts it, “In specifically Israelite terms, we must view its tribalism as a form chosen by people who consciously rejected Canaanite centralization of power and deliberately aimed to defend their own uncensitized system against the effort of Canaanite society to crush the budding movement. Israel’s Tribalism was an autonomous project which tried to roll back the Zone of political centralization.” (p. 325, *Tribes of Yahweh*).

Basically what we’re talking about is anarchist resistance to repressive socio-political forces. Tribalism amongst the ancient Israelites seems to be a necessary step to maintain their cohesive vision of hunter- gatherer/ band origins in the midst of oppressive cultural/ domesticating/ civilizing forces. “All the evidence for early Israel points to its tribalism as a self- constructed instrument of resistance and of decentralized self rule...Israel’s tribalism was politically conscious and deliberate social revolution and more loosely, a civil war in that it divided and counter posed peoples who had previously been organized within Canaanite city states.” (Tribes of Yahweh)

I submit that the tribalisation of ancient Israel replete with its mixed agrarian-pastoralist economy was spurred on by the deep rooted memory of band society and a lived state of anarchy. I would further conjecture that this is the basic model of Eden and consequently Judeo-Christian origins. Evan Eisenberg’s book, Ecology of Eden lends support to this idea via a mix of midrash recollections about the wild origins of Eden. Indeed the Jewish mystics reveal virtually no hint of a god ordained agrarian understanding of Genesis origins myths. David Abrams book *The Spell of the Sensuous* looks to the Jewish Kabbalist tradition for a deep rooted spiritual understanding of nature. Within these mystical Jewish traditions Eden is most frequently located on a Mountain, the essence of wild untamed creation. Similarly the term Garden seems to be an invocation of God’s place, God’s garden is more appropriately understood as the whole earth, Adam and Eve as the most basic substrata of band society, man and woman, hunter and gatherer. Sabbath and Jubilee disrupt agrarian practices in order to reorient the people to their undomesticated origins. The domesticators war is still being waged against the wild origins of the Judeo-Christian faith. But wildness cannot be killed, it will always rise from the dead.

sections from: *The Tribes of Yahweh*:

“Israel’s enemy was a sociopolitical system to be abolished.”

“Israel’s enemies were particular persons in various socioeconomic and political



groupings who profited from the hierarchic system as rulers or agents of the system at various levels.”

“When Israel used the term ‘Canaan/Canaanite’ to designate those enemies, precise socioeconomic and political groupings and functionaries within the hierarchic system were meant: Canaanite Kings, Canaanite armies, Canaanite merchants, Canaanite landowners/overseers, Canaanite city-state officials and Canaanite gods and cults and their priestly functionaries.”

“Canaanite refers to a hierarchic socioeconomic and political system peopled by kings, administrators, armies, deities, priests, etc. In short, a system and a set of roles and functionaries ideologically justified and energized by certain beliefs about gods and by cult acts resolutely geared to solidify the system and to extend the system.” (p. 587)

Conclusions:

Yahwism acts as an egalitarian counter to Canaanite civilizing ethos.

Yahwism isn’t a ‘re-tribalization’ effort, it’s a rewilding effort of which tribalization is a necessary evil for purposes of self-preservation.

## The Body and Revolt

By Massimo Passamani (excerpt)

The entire history of Western Civilization can be read as a systematic attempt to exclude and isolate the body. From Plato on, this has been seen as folly to control, impulse to repress, labor power to arrange, unconscious to psychoanalyze.

The Platonic separation of the body and the mind, a separation carried out to the complete advantage of the latter (“The body is the tomb of the mind”), even accompanies the seemingly most radical expressions of thought.

A profound liberation of individuals entails an equally profound transformation of the way we conceive the body, its expression and relations.

Due to a battle-trained Christian heritage, we are led to believe that domination controls and expropriates a part of the human being without damaging her inner being.

I think instead that our body has suffered and continues to suffer a terrible mutilation. And this is not only due to the obvious aspects of control and alienation determined by technology. (That the bodies have been reduced to reservoirs of spare organs is clearly shown by the triumph of transplants, which is described with an insidious euphemism as a “frontier medicine.” But to me the reality seems much worse than pharmaceutical speculations and the dictatorship of medicine as a separate and powerful body reveals.) The food, the poisoned air, the daily relations have atrophied our senses. The dreadful chit-chat tortures both the mind and the body since no separation is possible between them.

“Morality is exhaustion,” said Nietzsche.

To affirm one’s own life, that exuberance that demands to be given, entails a transformation of the senses, ideas and relationships.

I have frequently come to see people as beautiful, even physically, who had seemed almost invisible to me until a short time earlier. When you test yourself in resistance, when you fight back with someone, you see in your friends beautiful individuals, and not the sad faces and bodies that extinguish their light.

I believe we really are becoming beautiful in the moment when we resist that which attempts to separate thought from action.

Another factor inhibiting the development of a fully phonetic script was the often elite status of the scribes. Ideographic scripts must make use of a vast number of stylized glyphs or characters, since every term in the language must, at least in principle, have its own written character. (In 1716 a dictionary of Chinese—admittedly an extreme example—listed 40,545 written characters! Today a mere 8,000 characters are in use.) Complete knowledge of the pictographic system, therefore, could only be the province of a few highly trained individuals. Literacy, within such cultures, was in fact the literacy of a caste, or cult, whose sacred knowledge was often held in great esteem by the rest of society. It is unlikely that the scribes would willingly develop innovations that could simplify the new technology and so render literacy more accessible to the rest of the society, for this would surely lessen their own importance and status.

...it is clear that ancient writing was in the hands of a small literate elite, the scribes, who manifested great conservatism in the practice of their craft, and, so far from being interested in its simplification, often chose to demonstrate their virtuosity by a proliferation of signs and values...

Nevertheless, in the ancient Middle East the rebus principle was eventually generalized—probably by scribes working at a distance from the affluent and established centers of civilization—to cover all the common sounds of a given language. Thus, “syllabaries” appeared, wherein every basic sound-syllable of the language had its own conventional notation or written character (often rebuslike in origin). Such writing systems employed far fewer signs than the pictographic scripts from which they were derived, although the number of signs was still very much larger than the alphabetic script we now take for granted.

The innovation which gave rise to the alphabet was itself developed by Semitic scribes around 1500 B.C.E. It consisted in recognizing that almost every syllable of their language was composed of one or more silent consonantal elements plus an element of sounded breath—that which we would today call a vowel. The silent consonants provided, as it were, the bodily framework or shape through which the sounded breath must flow. The original Semitic *aleph-beth*, then established a character, or letter, for each of the consonants of the language. The vowels, the sounded breath that must be added to the written consonants in order to make them come alive and to speak, had to be chosen by the reader, who would vary the sounded breath according to the written context.

By this innovation, the *aleph-beth* was able to greatly reduce the necessary number of characters for a written script to just twenty-two—a simple set of signs that could be readily practiced and learned in a brief period by anyone who had the chance, even by a young child. The utter simplicity of this technical innovation was such that the early Semitic *aleph-beth*, in which were written down the various stories and histories that were later gathered into the Hebrew Bible, was adopted not only by the Hebrews but by the Phoenicians (who presumably carried the new technology across the Mediterranean to Greece), the Aramaeans, the Greeks, the Romans, and indeed eventually gave rise (directly or indirectly) to virtually every alphabet known, including that which I am currently using to scribe these words.

With the advent of the *aleph-beth*, a new distance opens between human culture and the rest of nature. To be sure, pictographic and ideographic writing already involved a displacement of our sensory participation from the depths of the animate environment to the flat surface of our walls, of clay tablets, of the sheet papyrus. However, as we noted above, the written images themselves often related us back to the other animals and the environing earth. The pictographic glyph or character still referred, implicitly, to the animate phenomenon of which it was the static image; it was that worldly phenomenon, in turn, that provoked from us the sound of its name. *The sensible phenomenon and its spoken name were, in a sense, still participant with one another*—the name a sort of emanation of the sensible entity. With the phonetic *aleph-beth*, however, the written character no longer refers us to any sensible phenomenon out in the world, or even to the name of such a phenomenon (as with the rebus),

Some researchers assert that the picture writing of native North America is not yet “true” writing, even where the pictures are strung together sequentially—as they are, obviously, in many of the rock inscriptions (as well as in the calendrical “winter counts” of the Plains tribes). For there seems, as yet, no strict relation between image and utterance.

In a much more conventionalized pictographic system, like the Egyptian hieroglyphics (which first appeared during the First Dynasty, around 3000 B.C.E. and remained in use until the second century C. E.), stylized images of humans and human implements are still interspersed with those of plants of various kinds of birds, as well as of serpents, felines, and other animals. Such pictographic systems, which were to be found as well in China as early as the fifteenth century B.C.E, typically include characters that scholars have come to call “ideograms.” An ideogram is often a pictorial character that refers not to the visible entity that is explicitly pictures but to some quality or other phenomenon readily associated with that entity. Thus—to invent a simple example—a stylized image of a jaguar with its feet off the ground might come to signify “speed.” For the Chinese, even today, a stylized image of the sun and moon together signifies “brightness”; similarly, the word for “east” is invoked by a stylized image of the sun rising behind a tree.

The efficacy of these pictorially derived systems necessarily entails a shift of sensory participation away from the voices and gestures of the surrounding landscape toward our own human-made images. However, the glyphs which constitute the bulk of these ancient scripts continually remind the reading body of its inherence in a more-than-human field of meanings. As signatures not only of the human form but of other animals, trees, sun, moon, and landforms, they continually refer our senses beyond the strictly human sphere.

Yet even a host of pictograms and related ideograms will not suffice for certain terms that exist in the local discourse. Such terms may refer to phenomena that lack any precise visual association. Consider, for example, the English word “belief.” How might we signify this term in a pictographic, or ideographic, manner? An image of a phantasmagorical monster, perhaps, or one of a person in prayer. Yet no such ideogram would communicate the term as readily and precisely as the simple image of a bumblebee, followed by the figure of a leaf. We could, that is, resort to a visual pun, to images of things that have nothing overtly to do with belief but which, when named in sequence, carry the same *sound* as the spoken term “belief” (“bee-leaf”). And indeed, such pictographic puns, or *rebuses*, came to be employed early on by scribes in ancient China and in Mesoamerica as well as in the Middle East, to record certain terms that were especially amorphous or resistant to visual representation. Thus, for instance, the Sumerian word *ti*, which means “life,” was written in cuneiform with the pictorial sign for “arrow,” which in Sumerian is also called *ti*.

An important step has been taken here. With the rebus, a pictorial sign is used to directly invoke a particular sound of the human voice, rather than the outward reference of that sound. The rebus, with its focus upon the sound of a name rather than the thing named, inaugurated the distant possibility of a *phonetic* script (from the Greek *phonein*: “to sound”), one that would directly transcribe the sound of the speaking voice rather than its outward intent or meaning.

However, many factors impeded the generalization of the rebus principle, and thus prevented the development of a fully phonetic writing system. For example, a largely pictographic script can easily be utilized, for communicative purposes, by persons who speak very different dialects (and hence cannot understand one another’s speech). The same image or ideogram, readily understood, would simply invoke a different sound in each dialect. Thus a pictographic script allows for commerce between neighboring and even distant linguistic communities—an advance that would be lost if rebuslike signs alone were employed to transcribe the spoken sounds of one community. (This factor helps explain why China, a vast society comprised of a multitude of distinct dialects, has never developed a fully phonetic script.)

## Unearthing the Sensual

anonymous

I am reluctant in my writing for this journal because I feel that so much of what I know and feel, words cannot encompass. Language is so limiting, so oversimplifying. Yet, although I do not hold onto the medium of language as a way to fully express my reality, I know there is some value in using this medium as an attempt to get a female voice across in a male-dominated journal.

Movements and critiques that root themselves in ideas presented largely by men I generally look upon with suspicion. Ideas that are framed in an intellectual, philosophical, language-based manner (which I realize to some extent is inescapable given the culture I’ve grown up in) often continue to give dominance to the ways of knowing that have been created by civilization. The critique of civilization feels like something I have known deep within me since I have memory of living, yet the names of men who’ve written books and given talks or the phrases and words used repeatedly in anarcho-primitivist circles were unfamiliar to me until recently. And although I feel myself in agreement with words and ideas, I don’t find them a necessary or deep enough way to engage with the fullness of my inner, primal being. As a woman I find myself much more deeply drawn to “practice” and embodiment. True, words and ideas and philosophizing are helpful because we have drifted so far from other ways of sensing/understanding and washed up on the shore of books, of study and academia. Yet how can these symbols on paper and be nearly enough to understand the depth of what is essential and primal? I feel that many women, with our cyclical rising and falling of hormone tides and bleeding bodies are still tapped into this embodied experience of life that our culture continues to fragment.

I recall sitting at a conference, distracted by the blood pouring from me, frustrated with keeping my body still in a chair, inside a building, staring at a screen filled with type, when deep within I felt compelled to move my limbs, stand and let my body empty itself, go through the necessary process of life. And again now I think about the pain in my head from squinting my eyes into this bright computer screen and I try to remind myself why am I staring at these words instead of the cup of water in front of me or the snow outside which I can reach out and touch, smell, and taste.

I do read. I discuss. And often find it to be helpful, interesting, sometimes enlightening. I find myself drawn more to books of practice, though, than theory or philosophy or ideology; how to alleviate pain through food and herbs, how to understand the rhythms and patterns of my moonly cycle, how to figure out which plants are edible and how they can be used for specific purposes. These are the ways of the body, the earth. They are not abstract or intangible like spirits or philosophies yet, unlike words, there is something elusive, indefinable about them. These ways are of the senses and I embrace them. And all that is still sensual in me.

*“This is why women are knowing creatures; they are made, in essence, of the skin of the sole, which feels everything. This idea that the skin of the foot is sentient had the ring of a truth, for an acculturated Kiche tribeswoman once told me that she’d worn her first pair of shoes when she was twenty years old and was still not used to walking ‘con los ojos vendados,’ with blindfolds on her feet.”*  
-Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*

:I have never wanted anything more than the wild creatures have – a broad waft of clean air, a

day to lie on the grass at times, with nothing to do but slip the blades through my fingers, and look as long as I pleased at the whole blue arch, and the screens of green and white between; leave for a month to float and float along the salt crests and among the foam, or roll with my naked skin over a clean long stretch of shiny sand; food that I liked, straight from the cool ground, and time to taste its sweetness, and time to rest after tasting; sleep when it came, and stillness, that the sleep might leave me when it would, not sooner – Air, rest, room, light, nakedness when I would not be clothed, and when I would be clothed, garments that did not fetter; freedom to touch my mother earth, to be with her in storm and shine, as the wild things are, --this is what I wanted, -- this, and free contact with my fellows; -- not to love, and lie and be ashamed, but to love and say I love, and be glad of it; to feel the currants of ten thousand years of passion flooding me, body to body, as the wild things meet. I have asked no more. "

--Voltairine de Cleyre, section from *The Sorrows of the Body*

# If a Bible Story Could Stop a Culture War:

## A Reflection on John 8, Prop 8, and the Politics of Affirmation

by Ched Myers (sections from the essay)

<sup>3</sup>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, <sup>4</sup>they said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' <sup>6</sup>They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. John 8:3-6

What we have here is a slam dunk case, a show trial. This poor woman's crime is uncontested-she's been caught *in flagrante delicto*. (The implication is positively salacious: how did they discover her? This is the stuff of tabloid justice.) True to the tradition of patriarchal law, the male offender in all of this is invisible. Perhaps he settled out of court, or more likely, went Scott free-you know, boys will be boys!

As for the defendant, the verdict is in, and the law is clear: death by stoning. But the authorities parade her through one more public humiliation, because they're after *Jesus*, too. They want to root out the moral rot, and both sinners *and* their suspected sympathizers must be denounced. This scenario is all too reminiscent of a Presbyterian plebiscite, a Methodist conference floor fight, or a Catholic pronunciamiento today. As one victim of such contemporary ecclesial processes said to me once, it's "ethic cleansing."

I love what happens next in John's story.

*Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup>When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'* <sup>8</sup>*And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.'* <sup>9</sup>*When they heard it, they went away, one by*

two bodies of belief already shared – or seem to have shared – a similar intellectual distance from the nonhuman environment.

In every other respect these two traditions, each one originating out of its own specific antecedents, and in its own terrain and time, were vastly different. In every other respect, that is, but one: they were both, from the start, profoundly informed by writing. Indeed, they both made use of the strange and potent technology which we have come to call "the alphabet."

Writing, like human language, is engendered not only within the human community but between the human community and the animate landscape, born of the interplay and contact between the human and the more-than-human world. The earthly terrain in which we find ourselves, and upon which we depend for all our nourishment, is shot through with suggestive scrawls and traces, from the sinuous calligraphy of rivers winding across the land, inscribing arroyos and canyons into the parched earth of the desert, to the black slash burned by lightning into the trunk of an old elm. The swooping flight of birds is a kind of cursive script written on the wind; it is this script that was studied by the ancient "augurs," who could read therein the course of the future. Leaf-miner insects make strange hieroglyphic tabloids of the leaves they consume. Wolves urinate on specific stumps and stones to mark off their territory. And today you read these printed words as tribal hunters once read the tracks of deer, moose, and bear printed in the soil of the forest floor. Archaeological evidence suggests that for more than a million years the subsistence of humankind has depended upon the acuity of such hunters, upon their ability to read the traces—a bit of scat here, a broken twig there—of these animal Others. These letters I print across the page, the scratches and scrawls you now focus upon, trailing off across the white surface, are hardly different from the footprints of prey left in the snow. We read these traces with organs honed over millennia by our tribal ancestors, moving instinctively from one track to the next, picking up the trail afresh whenever it leaves off, hunting the *meaning*, which would be the *meeting* with the Other.

The multiform meanings of the Chinese word for writing, *wen*, illustrate well this interpenetration of human and nonhuman scripts:

The word *wen* signifies a conglomeration of marks, the simple symbol in writing. It applies to the veins in stones and wood, to constellations, represented by the strokes connecting the stars, to the tracks of birds and quadrupeds on the ground (Chinese tradition would have it that the observation of these tracks suggested the invention of writing), to tattoos and even, for example, to the designs that decorate the turtle's shell ("The turtle is wise," an ancient text says—gifted with magico-religious powers—"for it carries designs on its back"). The term *wen* has designated, by extension, literature...

Our first writing, clearly, was our own tracks, our footprints, our handprints in mud or ash pressed upon the rock. Later, perhaps, we found that by copying the distinctive prints and scratches made by other animals we could gain a new power; here was a method of identifying with the other animal, taking on its expressive magic in order to learn of its whereabouts, to draw it near, to make it appear. Tracing the impression left by a deer's body in the snow, or transferring that outline onto the wall of the cave: these are ways of placing oneself in distant contact with the Other, whether to invoke its influence or to exert one's own. Perhaps by multiplying its images on the cavern wall we sought to ensure that the deer itself would multiply, be bountiful in the coming season...

All of the early writing systems of our species remain tied to the mysteries of a more-than-human world. The pertoglyphs of pre-Columbian North America abound with images of prey animals, of rain clouds and lightning, of eagle and snake, of the paw prints of bear. On rocks, canyon walls, and caves these figures mingle with human shapes, or shapes part human and part Other (part insect, or owl, or elk.)

# The Spell of the Sensuous

by David Abram, (excerpts pages 93-102)

The question regarding the origins of the ecological crisis, or of modern civilization's evident disregard for the needs of the natural world, has already provoked various responses from philosophers. There are those who suggest that a generally exploitative relation to the rest of nature is part and parcel of being human, and hence that the human species has from the start been at war with other organisms and the earth. Others, however, have come to recognize that long-established indigenous cultures often display a remarkable solidarity with the lands that they inhabit, as well as a basic respect, or even reverence, for the other species that inhabit those lands. Such cultures, much smaller in scale (and far less centralized) than modern Western civilization, seem to have maintained a relatively homeostatic or equilibrational relation with their local ecologies for vast periods of time, deriving their necessary sustenance from the land without seriously disrupting the ability of the earth to replenish itself. The fecundity and flourishing diversity of the North American continent led the earliest European explorers to speak of this terrain as a primeval and unsettled wilderness – yet this continent had been continuously inhabited by human cultures for at least ten thousand years. That indigenous peoples can have gathered, hunted, fished, and settled these lands for such a tremendous span of time without severely degrading the continent's wild integrity readily confounds the notion that humans are innately bound to ravage their earthly surroundings. In a few centuries of European settlement, however, much of the native abundance of this continent has been lost – its broad animal populations decimated, its many-voiced forests overcut and its prairies overgrazed, its rich soils depleted, its tumbling clear waters now undrinkable.

European civilization's neglect of the natural world and its needs has clearly been encouraged by a style of awareness that disparages sensorial reality, denigrating the visible and tangible order of things on behalf of some absolute source assumed to exist entirely beyond, or outside of, the bodily world. Some historians and philosophers have concluded that the Jewish and Christian traditions, with their otherworldly God, are primarily responsible for civilization's negligent attitude toward the enviroing earth. They cite, as evidence, the Hebraic God's injunction to humankind in Genesis 1: "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on the earth."

Other thinkers, however, have turned toward the Greek origins of our philosophical tradition, in the Athens of Socrates and Plato, in their quest for the roots of our nature-disdain. A long line of recent philosophers, stretching from Friedrich Nietzsche down to the present, have attempted to demonstrate that Plato's philosophical derogation of the sensible and changing forms of the world – his claim that these are mere simulacra of eternal pure ideas existing in a nonsensorial realm beyond the apparent world – contributed profoundly to civilization's distrust of bodily and sensorial experience, and to our consequent estrangement from the earthly world around us.

So the ancient Hebrews, on the one hand, and the ancient Greeks on the other, are variously taken to task for providing the mental context that would foster civilization's mistreatment of nonhuman nature. Each of these two ancient cultures seems to have sown the seeds of our contemporary estrangement – one seeming to establish the spiritual or religious ascendancy of humankind over nature, the other effecting a more philosophical or rational dissociation of the human intellect from the organic world. Long before the historical amalgamation of Hebraic religion and Hellenistic philosophy in the Christian New Testament, these

one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. John 8:7-9

The rabbi says nothing. Instead, he stoops to write something on the ground. When the prosecutors persist in pressing him to reveal his position, he stands up and invites those "without sin" to commence distributing justice. Then he resumes noodling in the sand.

This bending, rising, bending is so dramatic, so evocative. Modeling flexibility perhaps-of the body, for the body politic? Jesus' finger is the only one *not* pointing in this scenario. It is instead scratching out a mysterious message, perhaps prophetic graffiti, like Daniel's "handwriting on the wall" (Dan 5:5ff). We are, however, neither shown nor told what Jesus writes. It is a delicious moment, puzzling and wry all at once.

One by one, the crowd dissipates. Not jurors recusing themselves here, but judges! The prosecution has collapsed. Clear the courtroom! "And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him." The one who was "forced by the authorities to stand before all of them" is, well, *still standing*. After all the drama--the character assassination and the moralizing and the head wagging-she's somehow upright. Just like so many of those who have endured dominant culture scapegoating, race baiting, social invisibility, silencing and exclusion through the centuries: battered, bruised, but unbowed.

<sup>10</sup>Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'She said, 'No one, sir.' John 8:10-11

Rising for a second time, Jesus engages the woman directly, dignifying her as a subject. (Rarely do our ecclesial witch-hunters bother to talk to those whose sexual mores they interrogate.) He asks her-rather dryly, I'm thinking-about the sudden disappearance of her accusers. Finally the defendant gets a word in edgewise-"No sir, they done flew the coop."

Now comes the moment in our story that any church in moral quandary or ethical debate *putatively* longs for. In bumper sticker parlance: WWJD? The One who our Christian orthocrats deem to be "without sin" is about to issue his official ruling on this matter, to offer unequivocal guidance on the issue they deem to represent the moral watershed. Here at last is God's own edict concerning the boundaries of marriage law, free of cultural static. Let's settle this hash once and for all.

"And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you...'" This verb (in Greek *katakrinō*), which appears twice here in John's punch line, is important. It is employed by the apostle Paul in his famous argument for divine grace in Romans 1-2. This is germane because it is there that we also find the verse (Rom 1:26f) that is used incessantly by the Christian morality tsars to beat up homosexuals.

This is, of course, another example of these prosecutors missing the point. In fact, Paul's conclusion in Rom 2:1 sounds very much like Jesus' in John 8:

You are without excuse, whoever you are who would judge, for in passing judgment on the other, you condemn (Gk *katakrineis*) yourself, because you are practicing the very same things!

Indeed, Paul's theological manifesto on grace in Rom 6-8 culminates with the extraordinary and unequivocal declaration: "There is therefore no condemnation (Gk *katakrima*) for those who are in Christ Jesus!" (Rom 8:1). Such does not appear, however, to be the faith of those who invoke the apostle to exclude gays and lesbians. Instead, Constitutional amendments and righteous resolutions and threatened splits fly like stones, with intent to kill.

John's story ends abruptly with Jesus' simple invitation to a fresh start: "Go your way,



and from now on do not sin again." The Divine guidance we've been waiting for turns out to be what Elsa Tamez calls "the amnesty of grace." Restorative justice trumps retributive legalism. And the moral of the story: the one true prerequisite to rendering judgment is *self-examination*. Case closed.

As so often with scripture, this ancient wisdom invites us into some deep waters. John's scenario of the authorities gathered to "*execute* justice"—that grimmest of *double entendres*—has, of course, been repeated ad nauseum in the history of our church, but without the happy ending. Jesus' response unmask the two characteristics that lay beneath the theology and politics of condemnation. One is the presumption that one's own position on the issue is normative. The other is a distinct lack of humility. Both are necessary to sustain an effort to render another person or group inferior or expendable, and both lead to ideologies, practices, and policies of dehumanization. No matter how painfully polite or putatively pious the exclusionists may be, dehumanization is the spiritual and psychological reality.

It is a depressingly old script in the long, bloody history of discrimination—whether by canons of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or anything else. It certainly isn't unique to Christianity, but we Christians should be rightly troubled by the Christian exercise of exclusionary presumption. This suggests that our gospel vocation is not just about "inclusion" of those cast out by the dominant culture. To be "open and affirming" is not mere "tolerance," or "don't ask don't tell" delicacy. The important work of reconstructing our churches and institutions as safe havens is necessary, but not alone sufficient.

Jesus calls for a fierce *solidarity*, which seeks to defend the despised against the constant, widespread threats of re-victimization in all its forms. In terms of John's story, we might pose the question thus: "Who is going to help this woman continue to stand in the *aftermath* of this horrific trauma, and to accompany her through the inevitable backlash and isolation?"

Affirmation means engaging with the "false gospel" of exclusion in the struggle for hearts and minds. Should we not be more militantly evangelical than our adversaries? After all, it is the theology of *welcome* that represents the good news today, not the politics of condemnation. We dare not be timid, for it is both a responsibility and a privilege to stand with those despised, "whose angels stand ever before the face of God" (as Jesus remarkably puts it in Mt 18:10). And to do so is to be surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses who have endeavored to do the same through the ages.

But there is one more thing to be said about John 8. That is the way it immediately circles around and cracks back on those of us whose impulse is to condemn those who are condemning. How quick we are to replicate the very characteristics this story exposes—to absolutize our own position, and to jettison humility in our righteous advocacy. We love to imagine—at least in our hearts—the excommunication of our enemies. But as soon as we start reaching for stones to hurl, Jesus gets ready to switch sides.

This story's wildly circulating grace confounds any attempt to redraw the lines of in and out. We should not be too sure of ourselves, because we have a long way to go to truly embody solidarity, and we have too many blind spots. As Audrey Lorde famously put it, we must be vigilant about "doing our *own* work." Moreover, we all have to figure out what it means to "sin no more." Issues of ethical behavior remain after inclusion has been secured.

And as for humility, we could start by asking why it took *us* so long—both as individuals and as institutions—to take our stand with the vulnerable, who were enduring their marginalization long before we showed up. It seems to me that part of the self-examination to which Jesus invites *everyone* in John 8 is to acknowledge that we are all on a journey to deeper and wider communion. We are all only on the road, not at the destination, and no one is beyond the reach of grace.

In looking to the origins of his society—albeit mythical ones—in order to explain and challenge the present, John Ball was a primitivist. In advocating equality in an abundant Nature, Ball came close to anarcho-primitivism, though we've already shown the residue of hierarchical thinking in his world view.; and in the earliest communities, people gathered the fruits of the earth rather than dug them up ... Looking for a utopian element in the Peasants' revolt, Fredy Perlman also looked to Eden.

"The poor priests .. read aloud about a place called Eden where there were no priests or lords or merchants, where human beings were kin and shared all things in common." (25)

Also noting Ball's:

"Good folk, things cannot go well in England nor shall until all things are in common and there is neither villein nor noble, but all of us are of one condition."

Perlman places himself firmly in the millenarian, primitivist camp, arguing this is about the supercession of class society, utopia, not workerism.

"The English insurgents announce the end of the Leviathanic world, not its completion. The condition the insurgents want is not universal villeinage but universal freedom; it is the condition of communities of free human beings in the state of nature, unencumbered by Leviathanic separations and usurpations. The rebels say common people can cast off their yoke if they will; they can all gather the wheat and burn the tares. The wheat is Eden. The tares are priests and lords, lawyers and judges, masters and merchants."

If John Ball has passed any lesson for us down through the annals of history, this one—and none less—is still worth hearing. Not of moderation, of putting limited demands for financial improvement, but of the revolutionary desire for authenticity and true human community that underlay them.



"It's a prickly topic, spirituality. Sloppy and pedantic talk about God is obnoxious and dangerous, and those who parade such talk have knocked the religion clean out of us, with no sense of loss. But reverence for life is not religion. Reverence for life is the basis of compassion, and of biological health. This is why, much as it may embarrass those of us trained in the agnostic sciences, I believe every life loving human on Earth carries a far from agnostic obligation to remain primitive enough, and reverent enough, to stand up and say to any kind of political power or poll or public: trees and mountains are holy. Rain and river are holy. Salmon are holy. For this reason alone I will fight with all my might to keep them alive."

--David James Duncan  
from, *My Story as Told by Water*

There are those who say Christians cannot be anarchists or primitivists as it is Christianity which forms the bedrock of authoritarianism and civilization. To them we respond: How can the rain not fall, how can the wolf not kill.

# JOHN BALL: PRIMITIVIST

By John Connor

(section from the essay which originally appeared in *Green Anarchist* 1999)

My purpose here is not to establish the millenarian credentials of John Ball and his revolting peasants, but to draw out the primitivist content of his gospel. Strangely Hilton leads in here by noting "Sermons in denunciation of the rich ... were not exclusive to heretics or other conscious rebels against ecclesiastical or secular authority. They were a common-place of clerical moralists who selected the characteristic crimes of every estate in the social order for castigation ... Walsingham was no doubt right in attributing to John Ball the sermon text 'When Adam delf and Eve span, who was than a gentilman' but it was already a commonplace in this or similar forms, as is shown in an early fourteenth century religious poem:

"When Adam delf and Eve span  
Whare was than the pride of man?"

Why the medieval church was beset by endless eruptions of egalitarian heresy is because egalitarianism was an intrinsic—if awkward—part of their own ideology. The very basis of monasticism and the mendicant orders that followed them was Acts IV, which describes how the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem "had all things common ... and distribution was made unto every man according to his need." Looking back to Eden—and the Stoics—St Ambrose (no less) said:

"The Lord God specially wanted this earth to be the common possession of all, and to provide fruits for all; but avarice produced the rights of property."

Nor was he alone in this opinion, through a route too unlikely to go into here, a passage glorifying the communistic state of Nature— even free love—was included in the basic Canon Law text, Gratian's *Decretum*. (!)

There appears to be nothing between the sentiments of St Ambrose and John Ball (or Gerrard Winstanley, for that matter), but in fact the Church fathers did create a distinction. In his *City of God*, sourpuss St Augustine argued

"inequality, slavery, coercive government and even private property had no part in the original intention of God and had come into being only as a result of the Fall. Once the Fall had taken place, on the other hand, a development began which made such institutions indispensable. Corrupted by Original Sin, human nature demanded restraints which would not be found in an egalitarian order; inequalities of wealth, status and power were thus not only consequences of but also remedies for sin."

Just as Ball took conventional Church doctrine on the Millennium and radicalised it by making it imminent, so he took church doctrine on the communitarian state of Nature and radicalised it by rejecting the Fall and Original Sin. There were those in the Spiritual Franciscan tradition that had—perhaps—come to the same conclusion but this is more typical of the antinomian tradition beginning in the early 13th Century with the Brethren of the Free Spirit.

# GOATWALKING

by Jim Corbett (excerpts)

## On Errantry

"Errantry means sallying out beyond a society's established way, to live according to one's inner leadings. This looks like, and in a sense is, madness - Quixote's Madness. Both the lunatic and the visionary create a life outside the ready-made roles prescribed by their society, adjustment to these roles constituting a society's understanding of sanity. As social animals, ants are invariably sane, but human beings are typically alienated.

Our anxiety, restlessness, make-believe, compulsive intervention, freedom, and creativity are all rooted in the reflective awareness that distinguishes humankind. We aren't called to cure alienation by destroying reflective awareness with surgery, drugs, discipline or meditation. The world has enough ants. Mere survival would constitute adaptation if we were simply living creatures. As life becomes reflective, we must choose to adapt either demonically by trying to process the world, or prophetically, by actively participating in creation.

In its quest of full communion, errantry neither waits for recruits nor compromises to gain allies. It shrugs off the arguments of all theological or political parties, each of which claims to have discovered the right way to fracture time and the world into good ends and effective means. It is therefore an insecure, impolitic, minority way of life. Errantry disdains adaptive pretense, majoritarian morality, and all politic forms of solidarity because it is based on the Quixote Principle: *To open the way, a cultural breakthrough need not involve masses of people but must be done decisively by someone.*

Errantry's archenemy, "the Conjurer," substitutes symbolic appearances for the lived actuality, contriving a name to replace the quest. Conjuring often takes the form of organized religion. For example, in a society at war with man and nature, a religion of peace and love might be fantasized into creeds, rituals, and otherworlds while its professed adherents continued to live by conquest. The Conjurer also deludes both the religious and irreligious into assuming that errantry, rather than conjured make-believe, is the fantasy. This contrast has to do with two radically different meanings of faith: For errantry, faith is fulfilled here and now as cocreativity; for conjuring, one's faith is professed rather than lived, as a belief in good goals to which the living present is a sacrifice."



# BEYOND HAITI

By John Connor

(a section from **Children of Guinea: the 1793 Haitian Revolution and After**)

We are Neg Guinee, the people of Africa<sup>[102]</sup>  
Password to Voodooist Ceremony

For anyone that thinks history is like walking, just putting one step in front of the other — ‘ware Haiti, for it is full of swamps. Haitian history is even more highly politicised — and racialised — than usual, with criticism of a national leader of a century ago immediately assumed to be criticism of the nation’s current leader also. In part, this is the heritage of noirism — with its insistence on elevating former Black leaders — but mulatto reactions to this have been equally partisan. Alfred Viau, who was to turn against Duvalier as an incidental candidate in the 1956 election, argued there were <sup>[103]</sup> two tendencies at work in Haitian history: louverdurisme, which stood for the union of black and white against mulatto, “to the detriment even of the sovereignty and independence of the country”; and petio-dessalinisme, representing the union of black and mulatto Haitians against the whites, with the aim of complete independence of the country.

What’s wrong with this picture? Apart from the omission of any valatteo-colonialistisme, where mulattos and Whites ally against the Blacks to their own overall disadvantage, the whole history of Haiti is seen in terms of the policies of its leaders rather than the experiences of the common people, the peasantry — and it wouldn’t be unfair to suggest that the race of those leaders also features prominently in Viau’s schema.

So is an objective history possible? Probably not, and I certainly haven’t attempted one. It’s surely enough to lay cards on the table and for readers to use their own judgment. I make no pretence to be anything other than an amateur with limited sources and resources, and hope to provoke better analyses than my own! In this, I am only following CLR James’ example, where he prefaces his *Black Jacobins*:<sup>[104]</sup> I was tired of reading and hearing about Africans being persecuted and oppressed in Africa, in the Middle Passage, in the USA and all over the Caribbean. I made up my mind that I would write a book in which Africans or people of African descent instead of constantly being the object of other peoples’ exploitation and ferocity would themselves be taking action on a grand scale and shaping other people to their own needs.

I’m inclined to agree that a constant barrage of victimistic propaganda empowers no-one but liberals and in a 1980 Foreword he also triumphantly notes how his account of the role of the mulattos in the Haitian revolution aided anti-*apartheid* activists in South Africa to form an effective analysis of how best to co-operate politically with those classified as Coloureds there.

What I found exceptionally irritating about James’ analysis was that his solution to the problem of victimism is to create a role model, Toussaint L’Ouverture as untutored child of the Enlightenment and revolutionary hero in the mould of Lenin. This might have been a riposte to the rising Griot movement in Haiti — which James, as a good Marxist wedded to Progress and internationalism, could only abhor — but he clearly attributes heroic revolutionary deeds to Toussaint that had already been achieved earlier elsewhere by others (Sonthonax’s arming of the people is a case in point) and fails to distinguish between the interests of Tou-

of some segments of society. (HRC) Many things must change, but the first must be our mindset. As we explore alternative medicines and re-connect with the wild, we will find the prophecy of the Christian tradition come alive, “A tree shall sprout up in the middle of the city’s main street, and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:2

Sources:

(LEC) *A Lesson in Earth Civics* by Chellis Glendinning

(WMN) *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Woman Healers* by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English (page 5)

(TWTW) Quoted in *The Witch and The Wildness* by Kevin Tucker (paragraph 5)

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(THMMH) *The Herbal Medicine-Makers Handbook* by James Green

(HRC) *Health and the Rise of Civilization* by Mark Nathan Cohen

## The Rebels Dark Laughter

By Bruno Filippi, excerpts

“Humanity considers itself noble. It speaks of heroism, of progress and is not aware of its infection. The abyss has opened up and humanity falls into it singing, howling, quarreling, with its god, its fatherland, its murderous civilization, its elegant degeneration.”

One prays, one implores, one curses, but one does not dare.

Cowardice, caressed by Christianity, creates morality, and this justifies baseness and begets renunciation. But this desire to live, this will, only desires to develop feely.

The Christian takes a good look around to see if anyone is looking and then, trembling, commits a sin.

Desire: sin; love:sin. This is the inversion.

Harlot, everybody’s woman, you have no shame in the world. You are frank and sincere. You offer yourself to anyone who pays, never giving or taking illusions.

Civilization on the other hand, modest and clean in appearance, but horribly infected with gangrene throughout its body, makes me vomit, fills me with horror and loathing, kills me.

I envy savages. And I will cry to them in a loud voice: “Save yourselves, civilization is coming!”

I am gathering all the agony of the world together. Maybe I am crazy. But my madness is the most terrible rationality. I see further, I feel more vividly. I don’t know why, but it is certain that I suffer enormously, much more than before.

Before this? To think that before this, I was a child! But why is this? What have I done? I watch the daisies growing peacefully; the swallows come and go across the paths of the sky. The dew and the open blue sky please me as well.

But instead...I am handcuffed, splashed with mud, starved. Without love, without freedom.

Brothers in chains, sisters in suffering, the battle is at hand.

with the women who were killed, and with the traditions that were killed off, such as the Native Americans and more recently, Appalachian culture. Yet thankfully much of it has indeed been preserved, and of course much of it is intuitive. Within the last 40 years there has been a huge resurgence in herbal medicine. It again began to emerge as a people's movement and again is quickly becoming co-opted by the market. As soon as an herb becomes popular, it is quickly threatened with extinction. Corporate interests, influenced by reductionist science, market the 'essential oils' or extract the 'active ingredients' as the healing agents of herbs and charge an outrageous price for these heroic remedies. This is not herbalism. This is not people's medicine. Re-gaining knowledge of herbal medicine begins by reconnecting with the wild. Spending time in the woods or starting a garden can be effective medicine in and of itself. The civilized world has forgotten the natural cycles and flows of the earth, and necessarily so. Reconnecting with the earth can be seen then as an act of resistance. Take time to get to know plants, where they grow, what they smell like. Pick a leaf off a plant you don't recognize. Smell it. Taste it. Is it bitter? How does it make you feel? Re-gaining this knowledge will take work and time. There are many people who have been doing this for a while, and they are often willing to teach. There are good books and manuals available, yet the best way to learn is by forging a relationship with plants, getting to know them and how they effect your body.

An alternative health care system not only begins with an alternative medicine, but by changing the way we view medicine altogether. Western medicine is based on treating symptoms. This is nonsensical. It's like prescribing a pain reliever to someone who keeps punching walls without telling them to stop, or finding out what is making them do it in the first place. Unfortunately this analogy is not too far off from actuality. An alternative medicine must be preventative. Waiting for problems to flare up is not helpful at all. Health must be maintained by catching problems before they get out of hand. This is only possible if health is viewed in a holistic sense. Maintaining a nourishing diet and keeping stressors to a minimum are then just as important as taking herbs. Some herbs have immediate effects, but most work slowly. They tone the endangered bodily system, nourishing it and keeping it working right, preventing dis-ease from occurring. Re-gaining a knowledge of nutrition and cultivating some sort of mindfulness practice such as prayer or meditation, is just as important, if not more so, as re-gaining a knowledge of healing plants.

An alternative medical system will rise up naturally and organically as we learn and spread this knowledge. It will look nothing like what we have. Neighbors and friends will share knowledge and medicines together with each other and nourish each other with food and conversation. Expensive pharmacies and cold sterile doctors offices will be replaced with foraging classes and canning parties. An alternative system must be the peoples medicine. It must be non-hierarchical and holistic. It must honor and respect the healer in all: in plants, in vegetables, in human and non-human animals. As the union slogan goes, we must build a new society in the shell of the old. But we have to also realize that true health is simply not possible in our current industrial society. Corporations cannot grow our food if it is going to nourish us. Exportation and industrial production must stop if we want to live on an unpolluted earth. There are those who make grand claims of clean alternative fuels, yet all the while ignoring the emotional and spiritual pollution that industrial society generates. Bringing down civilization may be the first line of treatment for global health and well-being. Yet the dis-ease of industrial society is really only a symptom of organizing society on such a large scale. This too must be done away with if we are to restore our health. *The nutrition of individuals appears often to have declined for any of several reasons: because increasingly complex society placed new barriers between individuals and flexible access to resources, because trade often siphoned resources away, because some segments of the society increasingly had only indirect access to food, because investments in new technology to improve production focused power in the hands of elites so that their benefits were not widely shared, and perhaps because of the outright exploitation and deprivation*

sainte as ruler and the masses he ruled. Of course, such cults of personality look archaic, even sinister, from a post-1990 perspective and I'd argue it's impossible to understand the subsequent history of Haiti if you don't understand why the people hated Toussainte for trying to return them to the plantations, something James' adoration of centralised, state-controlled economic development didn't equip him to do ("Five Year planning, comrades?").

But what of my own interests, rather than those of James as my principle source? Like most movements for social transformation, anarchists are fond of flagellating themselves for having insufficient minority representation: [\[105\]](#) "where are the workers?", "where are the women?", "we only have one token Black — does that make us racists?" (granting Bob Black's dictum: 'those that act most guilty about such issues usually have good reason to be' — probably). It's been simple common sense to me that minorities don't rush to join revolutionary movements for the same reason the overwhelming majority of people don't, because reformism provides sufficient palliatives to make their lives tolerable enough to make revolutionary solutions too much extra effort to be bothered with.

And, of course, there's the way these movements work too. Formally or informally, they are usually highly authoritarian and the last thing people want in seeking for their liberation is a revolutionary organisation that they're going to need to liberate themselves from too, complete with a new boss (usually too useless and uncharismatic to boss people about in the big, wide world outside the goldfish bowl of his — and it usually is 'his' — little sect) imposing 'correct thought' and formal or informal organisational discipline. This situation is doubly hard when the boss doesn't understand the interests of the minorities seeking a revolutionary solution through him, and crassly tries to have them mouthe a nonsensical 'party line' (typically with their concerns featuring only as some sort of 'bolt-on extra') instead of compromising his authority by treating them as equals and trying to find out what the real issues are through a mutual, learning dialogue.

Despite what I've said immediately above, I'm suspicious of simply 'asking the people', because as I've also said above, the majority are satisfied with reformist solutions to their life-situations — until they're implemented and found wanting. [\[106\]](#) Then, at best, another layer of the onion of oppression is unpeeled, but it'll take a lot more peeling and a lot of tears to get to the bottom of it all. And — to murder the metaphor — you might just end up going round and round in circles instead, as evidenced by the endless contradictory social science fads imposed on minorities one year to the next. Entertaining and lucrative though they are to the liberals dreaming them up, running courses on them, and implementing them in classic Orwellian 'double think' fashion, they just serve to preserve the system of oppression in classic Red Queen fashion ("running so fast just to stand still") rather than fundamentally challenging it. The liberal — particularly Leftist-liberal — propensity for accusing those with even minor divergences of opinion from their grant-securing canon of being 'racists' when they are clearly only career- and ideological competitors is so transparent that it's more comic than tragic, though certainly also ugly, contemptible and pathetic. My view was that if you wanted to find out what made Black people revolutionaries, you needed to look at Black revolutionaries and the Black revolutions they made and, I suppose, that also made them.

Inevitably one ends up picking and choosing according to one's own previous political predilections — in my case, Green — but one thing that would surprise those that think all you need to do is to post the word 'racism' endlessly or wave placards portraying icons of the latest Black victim of police violence to get the Black masses flocking in eager for revolutionary enlightenment is that the most authentic revolutionary Black groups, like the MOVE Organization in Philadelphia or the Earth People of Jamaica, actually don't put a great deal of emphasis on racism. They are not 'colour-blind' (as many of the more old school Leftist groups are, curiously including Haiti's small Communist Party) but do see racism as part of a totality of oppression and it is that totality that needs to be challenged to sweep racism away. Seen from a po-



litical perspective, this should be uncontroversial — if racism is a social control mechanism, then this should bring all other social control mechanisms into question for revolutionaries, and the type of society that needs social control at all. Similarly, historically, racism as a specific means of defining the 'Other' is relatively recent — if not as recent as the 19th century imperialist anthropology discussed in this essay, certainly not much more than half a millennium old.

[107]

However, we're talking about relatively small, marginalised groups here — inevitably, given the ascendancy of reformism — and this is what led me to look at Haiti, at how a Black revolution was made and at what happened next. I confess to finding the material pretty difficult to deal with, given the deep and often absurd racial animosities created by the colonial legacy, the genocidal violence (not that there's anything wrong with offing our oppressors, of course), and the Haitian cult of authority, both generalissimo and *houngan*.

The issues certainly weren't all 'black and white' — whilst Haitians understand their national history in terms of race, as we have seen above, this history is replete with contradictions. The *politique de doubleure* inevitably had mulattos endorsing Black rulers and their Black rivals condemning them. Each ruling party would pretend there was no caste prejudice in Haiti as those they were excluding from power would charge it — but, with rare exceptions like the Griots, because this violated principles of racial equality rather than in order to assert their own. Although the noirist hero Dessalines' policy was to create an external enemy, the blancs as agents of slavery, his shift in terminology from mulattos and Blacks to *ancienne libes* and *nouveaux libes* demonstrated an economic understanding of the conflicts in Haiti. It was colonialism that fitted people to particular power niches according to colour, so it's understandable politics was articulated in those terms. And, most importantly, appeals to caste over class have again and again been shown to be consciously cynical, as Salomon's sell-out of the piquets most effectively illustrated — which suggests a way beyond this colonial heritage.

The question of authority is in a way both more troubling and more illuminating. Franz Fanon argued that wars of national independence restore self-respect to the formerly colonised, a sort of expiation through blood, but also noted: [108] the danger of national independence obtained by war — and unfortunately this is the only means of obtaining it with dignity — is that the heroes of this war necessarily become, after the victory, the effective representatives of power, having in their hands the military force which is the instrument of coercion at the same time as being the means of defence.

Moreover, with particular reference to the Haitian experience, Nicholls adds that such a revolution also "provides no insurance against the development of a personality cult, and in the case of Haiti it was the basis upon which such hero worship was built". [109] I suspect that Toussaintes campaign from Spanish San Domingo also illustrates a couple of other bases for Haitian autocracy. Firstly, by forming a disciplined core of troops using European drill, Toussainte helped release an organisational virus (the Europeans themselves being its progenitors, of course) where military discipline through a chain of command replaced the much less formalised and more charisma-orientated patterns of authority that existing in the Maroon bands previously resisting colonialism. His troops were expected to function as cogs in the military machine, their every action set by pattern book regulation and performed in unison by force of instilled habit, each accepting orders without question. Thus Toussainte's adoption of European military organisation was as much a political as a military tool for achieving power. This only serves to emphasise what CLR James had to say on the subject, Toussainte [110] left even his generals in the dark. A naturally silent and reserved man, he had been formed by military discipline. He gave orders and expected them to be obeyed. No one ever knew what he was doing.

There is no way such a leadership style would have been accepted in Maroon bands, where people expected to know the why of what they were doing in order to retain trust in

From this point on we see medical practice become an upper-class male dominated institution. Even later on as women began to be allowed to study, they were only afforded the opportunity to become nurses, and not doctors. This largely unquestioned trend continues today as the majority of doctors are male and nurses female.

As we think about an alternative health care system, we have to consider the origins of the one we have. It's history is ugly and unfortunate, but it can teach us a lot. Aside from the obvious atrocity we just discussed, I see two major problems with this medical system. First of all, it disregards the empirical. This system is rooted in a deep mistrust of senses, feelings, and intuition. Any thought of valuing the natural (dis)order of the world is thrown out with the bathwater, (and in this analogy, the wisdom of women healers is the bathwater.) A new system based on isolationism emerges. Western medical research isolates the individual components of the body that are responsible for the specific symptoms of the problem and treats them with isolated constituents of plants and chemicals. Though this method has proven effective and efficient, it's success happens at the expense of the whole. This diagnostic method ignores all environmental, emotional, and spiritual components of the problem. and the treatment ignores how the whole body system may be effected by, or perhaps the cause of, the dis-ease. Herbal medicine attempts to treat the whole body and the whole person. For example, inflammation in the urinary system, such as Interstitial Cystitis or Prostatitis, may be caused by environmental or emotional stressors, which would then lead to treating the nervous system as the first line of treatment. Good herbal medicine values the whole plant, including the 'inactive' constituents. The 'inactive' ingredients can act as balancing agents for the 'active' ingredients, aiding in digestion and easing any otherwise harmful actions of the constituents. Modern research has recently begun to show that there is such thing as good bacteria in the body and that this bacteria feeds off of these 'inactive' materials, which were once seen as having no beneficial purpose. (HMMH) This good bacteria is essential to good health.

The other problem I see is the specialization of medical knowledge. The repression that resulted because of medial professionalism is a common symptom of institutionalized knowledge. It takes knowledge and power out of the hands of the people and puts it into the universities, where it is only accessible to the upper-class, (and in these days the middle-class too). Regaining knowledge of our bodies and our health is a radical thing to do. It threatens the elitism of the medical system. Much of the witch-hunting was spurred on by this reality. As the peasants gained power and knowledge, they became more of a threat to the elite. The Popular Health Movement of the 1830's and 40's is a great example of such a peasant rebellion. Back when even the most basic knowledge of health and the body were unknown to the majority of the public, working class folks, mostly women, began to study and teach about the human body, emphasizing preventative care. *"The 'regular' doctors quickly found themselves outnumbered and cornered. From the left-wing of the Popular Health Movement came a total rejection of 'doctoring' as a paid occupation—much less as an overpaid 'profession.' From the moderate wing came a host of new medical philosophies, or sects, to compete with the 'regulars' on their own terms: Eclecticism, Grahamism, Homeopathy, plus many minor ones. The new sects set up their own medical schools, (emphasizing preventive care and mild herbal cures), and started graduating their own doctors... It was impossible to tell who were the 'real' doctors, and by the 1840's, medical licensing laws had been repealed in almost all of the states."* (WMN, 25) This of course happened in conjunction with the beginning of the feminist movement, which would attempt re-instate some of the dignity that women had lost from years of Church dogma and state repression.

An alternative health care system begins with an alternative medicine. We must shift our focus back to herbalism, nutrition, and spirituality as the primary methods of healing, for the reasons discussed previously. A lot of this knowledge has been eradicated right along

14:8), we can hear the voices of the redwoods, oaks and pines today urging humanity to stop clear-cutting our sustenance.

Herbal medicine goes back as far as we can know. There is evidence of Neanderthals using Yarrow, Marshmallow and other plant medicines still common today.(HT) Plant medicine seems to have been the norm for all of history and pre-history until western medicine's takeover. The witch burning craze spanning from the 14th to the 17th century, during which an estimated million 'wise women' were killed, is the disturbing narrative of western medicine's birth. Woman healers were indeed wise women. Paying attention to the natural cycles of the earth, listening to the wisdom passed down from prior generations, and doing the empirical research of trial and error, wise women developed an extensive pharmacology and an understanding of anatomy and physiology that put the then 'modern' research of the upper classes to shame. *"They had pain-killers, digestive aids and anti-inflammatory agents. They used ergot for the pain of labor at a time when the Church held that pain in labor was the 'Lord's' just punishment for Eve's original sin. Ergot derivatives are the principal drugs used today to hasten labor and aid in the recovery from childbirth. Belladonna—still used today as an anti-spasmodic—was used by the witch-healers to inhibit uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened... In 1527, Paracelsus, considered the "father of modern medicine," burned his text on pharmaceuticals, confessing that he "had learned from the Sorceress all he knew."* (WMN, 16)

What accounts for the treacherous suppression of women healers stems from the ideologies of both Church and State, two institutions that were essentially one in the same. The doctrines of the Church taught that women were inherently evil. Though such an accusation about the church seems exaggerated and unfair to many today, the writing of church officials regarding women will shed light on their blatant degradation. St. Tertullian's position on women in the 2nd Century makes it clear *"Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway, ...You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert even the Son of God had to die."* St. Augustine of Hippo agrees: *"What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman... I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children."* Centuries later, Martin Luther makes it clear that not much had changed, *"If they [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth, that's why they are there."* Women were the traditional healers of society, but as Church doctrine infused the mind of the western world, thinking that women had something so significant to offer was blasphemous.

The suppression of women as witches was, as I said, a product of both Church and State. Medical professionalism, a phenomenon beginning in Europe around the 13th century, made it easy to legally fault women for healing. As universities opened and doctors were trained, the practice of medicine became a legal matter. Only those with formal training were allowed to practice, and of course women were not permitted into these institutions. This is the point at which the bloody coop of western medicine began to flourish, helped along by the Churches degrading view of women. Women were tried and convicted for healing. *"Take, for example, the case of Jacoba Felicie, brought to trial in 1322 by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris, on charges of illegal practice. That her patients were well off is evident from the fact that (as they testified in court) they had consulted well-known university-trained physicians before turning to her. The primary accusations brought against her were that '...she would cure her patient of internal illness and wounds or of external abscesses. She would visit the sick assiduously and continue to examine the urine in the manner of physicians, feel the pulse, and touch the body and limbs.' Six witnesses affirmed that Jacoba had cured them, even after numerous doctors had given up, and one patient declared that she was wiser in the art of surgery and medicine than any master physician or surgeon in Paris. But these testimonials were used against her, for the charge was not that she was incompetent, but that—as a woman—she dared to cure at all."* (WMN, 17)

their leader (this also allowed for more individual initiative and flexibility, a prerequisite in guerrilla warfare).[111] People joined Toussainte because his troops had been trained to fight the colonists — and later British invaders — head-to-head using their own tactics. That, and a very traditional west African regard for kingship and its prerogatives. It's already been argued that Toussainte may have laid claim to the persona of a king to authorise him to free slaves during his advance into Haiti. Whether this was the case or not, kingship was part of the folk culture of the ex-African slaves and Toussainte certainly laid claim to noble lineage and was playing the role of a king, whether he explicitly declared himself as such or not. Dessalines and Christophe's subsequent assumption of kingly roles — much ridiculed in Europe, a subcontinent itself still hardly through with monarchy — were simply trying to bolster their authority in the most obvious and popular way.

However, just as class interests peep from behind the race question, so they do from behind this question of authority. The leader's interest is not necessarily that of the led, even if they share a common caste, and this is most dramatically the case in Haiti. I've mentioned Hartford's 'two nations' analysis of Haiti above — that of the ruling elites and of the tending-to-subsistence peasantry — a separation Nicholls re-emphasises when discussing the Duvalier regime:[112] The fact that his government did almost nothing to improve the lot of the average Haitian was irrelevant to his claims to legitimacy. No government in the history of Haiti had done anything significant to improve the lot of the masses and this was not the criterion by which a regime was judged. At least Duvalier usually refrained from interfering with the life of the peasant, and this is all they could hope for from a government.

As you'll see, I profoundly disagree with Nicholl's assessment that Duvalier had a 'hands-off' attitude to the peasantry[113], but at this stage I'm just arguing that the peasantry were more keen their rulers didn't interfere in their lives than their rulers were not to interfere in them. We've seen already that throughout the 19th century, the Haitian peasantry rejected the plantations and did their best to retreat as far as they could from government taxes, wars and conscription, preferring simple lives of subsistence.

Where — apart from the simple common sense of harm avoidance — did the peasantry choose this lifestyle over that their leaders so generously offered them? It is the inheritance of Africa, as preserved through the Maroons, the 'wild ones' that burst the bonds of slavery, and through its cultural survival in voodoo. With some adaptations to local circumstance — for example, the use of secret society initiation to eliminate tensions potentially caused by the ethnic mix created by the African diaspora — the Maroons were recreating west Africa in the mountain fastnesses of Haiti. This was the rock on which their resistance rested — and still does. Having inherited the culture of their former colonial masters, the mulatto elite's penchant for anti-voodoo leagues can clearly be seen as an attempt to bring the disengaged (would it be too satiric to say 'socially excluded'?) peasantry back into the formal economy and their control. The Black elite was in a slightly more ambiguous position viz a viz the masses, asserting their caste credentials to tar their mulatto rivals as 'blanc-identified', but their aim was the same. To a good degree, the unofficial history of Haiti has been the elites' attempts to assimilate the peasantry and subordinate their culture, first through anti-blanc rhetoric whilst confining them to the plantations, then through limited land reforms, and finally (Soulouque being a bit of an unappreciated pioneer) through the appropriation of voodoo. How did Duvalier achieve this? Through voodoo, Duvalier may have superficially been appealing to the peasantry as a whole — and many of them bought this lie — but was in fact only appealing to the habitants, richer peasants that had done well out of cash cropping and their poorer neighbours being forced into landlessness by population pressures, etc. And what do you know, but there was a direct overlap between this classe intermédiaire and the *houngans*, those holding privileged positions in rural life in the economic sphere also doing so in the esoteric sphere, much as with European freemasonry?[114] This is frankly hardly surprising, as

voodoo initiations — especially through all the offices of the hounfort (lodge) to the rank of *houngan* — are extremely expensive, the feasting and ritual paraphernalia associated with each initiation typically amounting to six months wages for the average peasant. Additional to this, the model of authority supplied by the *houngan* even amongst the Maroons was then taken up as that of the national leader, a *houngan* writ large, especially in Duvalier's case.

How, then, does all this provide us with an appropriately revolutionary model of liberation, particularly Black liberation? Firstly, I want to explore what the peasantry were rejecting — in addition to the obvious — and why this was so intolerable to their rulers.

In rejecting plantation labour — whether under old masters or new — the peasantry weren't just rejecting the slave heritage those masters imposed on them but, more fundamentally, sheer physical effort.<sup>[115]</sup> Once ground in the interior had been broken, we're talking about a likely halving of their day in terms of the amount of work required to meet subsistence needs. As we've seen above, after the war of liberation, coffee production went even a stage further, the crop simply being gathered from coffee bushes run wild in an almost forager-type way. Toussainte may have exhorted the labourers that "work is necessary ... it is a virtue",<sup>[116]</sup> but their sons would never grow up to be like those fine French officers Toussainte so admired — nor did they wish them to, having had their fill of Frenchmen, their bloodhounds and other 'blessings' of the self-styled 'higher culture'. In rejecting large-scale production for export and their own proletarianisation to this end, the labourers also made it impossible for Haiti — once the "finest colony in the world" — to take its place in the world economy. In fact, they'd have preferred to burn Haiti end to end rather than submit to this, as the Night of Fire spectacularly demonstrated. This is no bad thing, inasmuch as it was just a producer of primary resources and a net importer of food, so this would have inevitably been a subordinate position profiting mainly middle-who/men, but the bottom line is that the logic of the lives of the masses won out over that of their rulers. In choosing to live lives immediately and to their greatest convenience, they also chose to reject abstract Progress alongside what is now commonly described as economic development, restricting their leaders' power and opportunities for self-aggrandisement. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud wrote that the pleasure principle had to be repressed for Civilisation to survive, even if that led to neurosis. Himself stridently bourgeois and a somewhat driven devotee of the Protestant work ethic / Jewish achievement ethic, Freud was largely talking about supplanting pleasure with production — precisely what was intolerable to the Haitian peasantry.

I think it's also helpful to explore the 'how' of this rejection. Subject to qualifiers below, it was total and it was armed, by a people armed of practical necessity, each to assure his or her own liberty and survival in the face of a campaign by former owners of literally genocidal ferocity. James sneered at the insurgents as "primitive" for destroying the means of production — by which he meant the plantations — and compared this to that of Medieval millenarian peasants in Europe. Indeed, and a comparison to their great credit, as such were far more radical and challenging to the existing order than modern, industrial revolts that leave the mechanics of subordination inherent in such production intact and a 'new guard' filling the old managerial class roles.<sup>[117]</sup> There was no need to stay their hand, to compromise with and / or assume the manner of their old masters, no need to preserve any part of their past oppression for some abstract 'higher stage' in future — they could live without all that and were the better off for it. And what stopped a return to such subordination for a very long time — certainly the better part of a century — was the peasantry's ability not only to live self-sufficiently outside the formal economy, but the means to prevent its encroachment by force of arms, just as the Maroons had previously done against the blanc plantocracy.

So much for what the peasantry were rejecting. What they affirmed, principally, was voodoo, but I want to argue this is more than just a cultural relic, an affirmation of some sort of 'Africaness' too easily dismissed as a colonial construct anyway (the original slaves were no

people fear and ward-off natural disasters instead of simply moving along. Instead of moving in conjunction with the natural flow of wildness- moving out as natural disasters move in- sedentary societies fear such life-changing phenomenon and of course must blame it on something or someone. This accounts for the witch blaming we see among so many sedentary cultures, an issue that we'll discuss later in this essay. This appearance of evil can be found in the origin story of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The movement from the paradise of the garden into the curse of agriculture is a direct result of the discovery of "good and evil." This represents a shift from living within the natural order, to fearing it, and viewing humanity as separate from it- victims of it's chaos. Wildness and anarchy then become feared and rejected, instead of embraced as natural.

The development of agriculture was not something that happened over night. There are three major elements that need to be in place for a society to make this shift: surplus, sedentism, and domestication. All three elements are found in early agricultural societies. Some hunter-gatherer societies remain sedentary, and maintain some form of egalitarianism, yet where all three are found, we find a loss of autonomy.

Another element common to agricultural societies is division of labor. Shamans and the like held the position of healer. Often they were the religious leaders as well since spirituality and health were seen as integral parts of each other. Though this sort of specialization would play a role in the shift to agriculture and hierarchical society, such healers were respected and honored, and did not seem to hold the kind of dominance we might expect to see from their role as leader.(LEC) Religion and specialized medicine represents a schism in the symbiotic relationship of humans and the rest of the earth. As we felt the estrangement from the natural world, it became necessary to develop ways to reconnect with it. This is the concept of ritual. It makes sense that this estrangement coincides with the loss of personal intuitive knowledge of plant medicines, necessitating the role of the shaman or witchdoctor. This is the birth of specialized medicine. Our estrangement can be traced back to this great schism, yet even the most civilized of worlds have always understood plants to be medicines, and many sedentary indigenous peoples relied on the gifts of the earth to heal spiritual and physical wounds. It isn't until western civilization that we move away from plant medicine altogether. The enlightenment brought us far away from the spiritual, and attempted to systematize everything, taking the wonder and the magic out of the world. Just as Aristotle and the civilized world were beginning to hyper-politicize society with law and order, modern science was beginning to ignore the well-understood natural (dis)order of the wild and replace it with natural laws and an imaginative order.

If we are to envision an alternative medical system, we must begin by reconnecting with the wild, learning to see the abundant gifts of the earth as part of us, necessary components of our nutrition and health. We cannot live without food and medicine, and so we are dependent on the wild. When we consume a plant or vegetable, it breaks up within our bodies and becomes the vitamins, minerals, and spirit that sustains our being. It become us and is no longer separate. Food is not a commodity. As the slogan goes, "food comes from the earth, not the store." If we want to move from our dependence on corporate controlled food and health care, it is necessary that we become intentional about learning the craft of gathering foods and medicines. Though we can trace the beginnings of this dependence back to agriculture, it is also necessary at this stage in the game to re-learn to grow our own foods and medicines. We have moved far from being a true agricultural society to one that is dominated by factory farmed meat and veggies. Huge corporate farms feed the masses, and most people have no concept of where their food comes from. At this point, re-learning the skill of agriculture can mark the beginning of our reconnection with the natural world. On that note, so much of our land has been pillaged and privatized that foraging is much less of an option than it once was. Just as the Cedars of Lebanon cried out to stop the deforestation of the ancient world (Isaiah

# Re-Imagining Health Care

by Rusty Poulette

Alternative medicine has become very trendy these days. It is no longer surprising to find all sorts of 'natural' treatments in corporate drugstores. Yet the market's emphasis on alternative medicine mirrors the green-washing taking place in all sects of society. Oil companies are launching campaigns to convince unthinking consumers that gas is 'green,' and anyone who is feeling guilty about their pollution can even purchase 'carbon footprint neutralizers,' a modern day indulgence, giving money to corporate greening campaigns instead of an authoritarian church. This new 'eco-awareness' consuming America too often goes unquestioned, and even is awarded the grand title of the next Green Revolution.

I believe that alternative medicine, in its pure, unmarketed form indeed has the potential to be revolutionary, yet that this revolution will take more work than simply walking to the local corner store to purchase the latest green miracle drug. A holistic revolution of health is needed in this country, especially as the pawns of national government fight out the best way to uphold industrial medicine's stranglehold on the people. Yet the revolutionary question to ask within the debate on health care in America is not how to make the health care system more accessible, but how to create an alternative to the system. Clues to a new model can be found hidden within the cultural and religious traditions of many pre-industrial societies, including the Judeo-Christian tradition. It's important to realize, though, that when we re-imagine health care, we are not inventing something new. We are looking back, past the infiltration of industrialism, to the way things were all of history and pre-history, reclaiming our heritage as healers. And even more importantly to remember, as we reconnect with our bodies and the medicines that the earth graciously offers us, we will find that the answers are hidden within ourselves. We are on a path to remember what we already know- the intuitive knowledge that has been with us all along.

Medicine has always been readily available to us. As someone who has only recently developed a passion for plant medicine, I must admit that I was shocked to find out that weeds I have for years trampled and neglected hold powers of health and vitality. So many times I have been filled with worry as to how I am going to afford medicine, only to crush a mullein leaf plant as I drive my car out the driveway to the drugstore where I'll pay an outrageous price for an expectorant less effective than the one I just crushed.

This ignorance is new to society and can be traced back to an identifiable cause. The knowledge of healing plants, fungi, and foods have been with us since the beginning. Just as non-human animals know what to eat to heal themselves, we once held such unquestioned knowledge. Agriculture, which changed the world through the introduction of domestication, specialization, and a consciousness of domination, made human animals increasingly believe that they were 'other than' the world in which they existed. When one begins viewing plants and animals as commodities to be controlled, a fundamental shift happens in the worldview of that individual. Plants are no longer allies depended on to complete the cycle of birth, growth, sustenance, and death, but 'natural resources' to be manipulated and controlled. This shift can be traced as we compare the activities of hunter-gatherer tribes with agricultural societies, particularly in the belief of the latter about witchcraft and evil. Women as healers and their suppression as 'witches' was taking place far before western medicine's bloody coop. Hunter-gatherers have little need for a belief in evil. It has been noted about the BaMbuti that "they have no fear, because for them there is no danger. For them there is little hardship, so they have no need for belief in evil spirits."(TWTW) A belief in evil appears once humans become sedentary and dependent on agriculture. Ignoring the natural chaos of the world, sedentary

Africans, but instead Dahomeyans, Whydah, Owe and so forth). In his novel anti-Occupation novel, *Gouverneurs de la rosee*, the Haitian Communist Party founder Jacques Roumain wrote "I have respect for your traditional customs but the blood of a cock or a goat cannot change the seasons." [118] Of course, this argument was as unscientific as the voodoo it challenged — until such sacrificial blood is withheld under controlled conditions, it is mere dogmatic assertion. As far as voodooists are concerned, their ritual practices have got results in a way those of dialectical materialism have singularly failed to do in Haiti — especially when it comes to sparking revolution. Far from being Marx's metaphorical 'opiate', voodoo has for centuries prevented the mass of people being co-opted by ruling class ideology — to the point that Duvalier was eventually forced to 'go through the back door' and co-opt them by co-opting voodoo itself — and has on many occasions driven them to the most inspired resistance. I am not dodging Roumain's point here, I am pointing out that voodoo's persistence despite objectivistic challenges to its truth-claims show such objections are irrelevant to voodoo's power and appeal as far as the oppressed are concerned. What, then, is this appeal? It is not enough to say it is mere 'identity' because that doesn't explore the content of that identity, most importantly whether it is something specific and therefore of local significance only or whether it has some more general or universal utility in facilitating revolution. As I see it, a sense of identity comes from a conjunction of its history and of daily practice.

The history we now know, a history African origins and myth, of genocidal exploitation, and of cultural, ritual and physical resistance to it. I have no particularly problems with this — a powerful enough story siding with the oppressed and not even exclusive of blancs provided they also side against oppression and accept a new, political identity as notional 'children of Guinea'.

In terms of daily practice, there is a voodooist community that reinforces its values through close mutual association and mutual support (often the only such support available in rural areas), a reading of the world for significance through voodoo eyes (ie. worldview), and the enactment of voodoo ceremonial at the hounfort. It is this last that I want to focus on as a potential road out of the usual problems of cultures being self-contained and self-affirming rather than particularly liberating.[119] In these rituals, individuals strive using pretty standard techniques of intoxication, rhythmic music and dance, to become timeless, selfless receptacles for the lwas. Some will argue this is mere role-play, probably unaware of what people are capable of in these altered states. Regardless — and I am not much interested in arguing with rationalists here, a mere variant on the counter-revolutionary Marxist tradition — this 'horse and rider' process demonstrates the boundaries of selfdom and of a dull, externally-controlled reality are highly elastic and vulnerable. Why is this particularly significant? John Zerzan's 'origins' essays [120] demonstrate that our lives are not only ruled by abstractions such as Time, number and language, but that these are a product of Civilisation, our enemy, which is relatively recent historically (at best 10% of human history, rather than an inevitable component of our humanity). As far as the 'horses' — and those sharing their experiences at the hounfort — are concerned, these mediations have been broken through for a glimpse of 'Africa', our free, unmediated heritage and a liberation from Civilised symbolic accretions that reaffirms the celebrants' faith in their undesirability. To repeat myself, against these powerful and unifying experiences, dogmatic Communist quibbles about the efficacy of cock and goat blood must have seemed pretty thin stuff.

Some would argue that whilst this insight may be useful and the orgiastic nature of voodoo rites certainly provide a counter-point that disinclines the majority of the oppressed associated with it from work, that the celebrants experiences are structured by the *houngan* or otherwise directed away from opportunities to make for meaningful social change:[121] Early religion is wildly orgiastic, clearly reflecting the lost way of life for which people longed. But by separating this wild abandon into the realm of the spirit, which is in reality just a realm of ab-



stract ideas with no concrete existence, religion made itself the handmaiden of civilized, domesticated culture. So it is no surprise that in time shamans evolved into priests who were functionaries of the State.

Whilst I will willingly concede that some are more receptive 'horses' than others, another key point is that it is not the *houngan* that typically enters these states — though s/he would not be a *houngan* if incapable of this — but the other celebrants, many of the congregation. Additionally, we have accounts from the revolution of Maroon mobs armed only with clubs or even just their bare hands rushing disciplined European troops armed with muskets, bayonets and artillery at the blast of the conch. Despite their technological disadvantage, the Maroons proved "unstoppable" — even thrusting their arms down the muzzles of cannon, believing this would prevent them discharging — because of the visions of Africa before them, demonstrating that they can be evoked anywhere, even in battle, rather than being separated from daily life in the hounfort. In fact, the whole point of voodoo is the imminence of the lwas, their 'here and now' availability — even unwanted intrusion, on occasion! — to all celebrants.

But, yes, I would agree that the *houngans* do exert undue authority in voodoo and, more to the point, voodoo is structured in such a way that they can do that. Initiations have to be bought from the *houngan* and the knowledge needed to 'make the grade' can only be taught by him or her to the initiate. This insistence on absolute loyalty (which may be enforced by direct action or at least social ostracism) is much akin to that between guru and disciple, and is an inheritance of west African traditions where a similar rigidity prevails in moities and secret societies there, themselves a reflection of it's peasant-orientated agricultural economies. I argue that it doesn't have to be that way and it shouldn't be that way if voodoo's full liberatory potential is to be released.

The 'weak' alternative is simple competition between visionaries, each arguing for the potency of their vision and attracting followings according to how is best vindicated by subsequent events. Such competitions were common in native American shamanism and still are in Latin America (though we're not talking Santarea here.) and a byproduct of this would be a leakage of higher initiation secrets to tempt the faithful, inevitably leading to further diversity of visionaries and a democratisation of such knowledge. However, the societies we're talking about here are hunter / gatherer or horticulturists (slash 'n' burn gardeners), so I think this route wouldn't make much of a dent in the more structured voodoo set up. It demands a lot of knowledge is accumulated before the process can start really rolling, that competition would be tolerated (though, to a certain extent, it is), and still implies a superiority of *houngan* over all lower-initiation celebrants.

However, the 'strong' alternative is that as the lwas speak through all celebrants and not just the *houngan*, then they all demand the ability to interpret and acquire other withheld *houngan* skills as a matter of right — each his or her own *houngan*, in effect. Many hunter / gatherer societies do not have spiritual specialists at all and, strange as this sounds, this approach is actually much more akin to other West African / West Indian traditions than the matter of competing shamans above. The 'I'n'I' of Rastafarianism, for example, is about the spiritual imminent in the personal with no formal higher level of institutionalised spiritual organisation. In this insistence on personal spiritual insight (and toleration of others diverse from their own), the Rastas of Jamaica are very much akin to those radicals of the Civil War period, the Ranterers, and incidentally are also highly aware of and articulate concerning their own African heritage. There is even a mechanism that exists for this in voodoo (allowing for a bit of 'back room' arm-twisting when it comes to accessing ritual secrets) — possession not by lwa but by deceased *houngan*, claims Duvalier was big on, as we've seen.

I've placed great emphasis on breaking down the *houngan's* political and spiritual authority as it is a model-in-miniature of political authority as a whole — as the Duvalier dynasty demonstrated — and besides at a village level, the *houngan's* authority is real whereas

WC—Stop being white. White is really a state of mind, it's a social construct. It's also a psychological disorder as far as I'm concerned. I despise Emma Goldman, who was a flaming eugenicist, racist. And I say that I despise her without in any way discounting the libratory content of her critique relating to class relations and gender relations. As an example of not being white, I'd ask, is David Gilbert really white? He's phenotypically a white guy, but I don't know too many people of any \_\_\_\_ group who would lay it on the line like he did. And he's consistent with it after thirty years in maximum security. He's absolutely clear in his principles, probably even more so today than the day he went in.

So how do we define white? Melanin in skin? David Duke and the Klan like that definition, but it's horse shit. Do we define white as class privilege? David Gilbert's serving the majority of his life in maximum security without renouncing his upper middle class upbringing, so that doesn't hold up. There is a correlation between white skin and privilege. Clearly his actions were a form of repudiating that privilege. But that doesn't change a thing in terms of the underlying stereotypes and archetypes. We need a different analytical lens to look at these things which ultimately goes to an understanding of self. So my first statement is really intended seriously. What can you do? Stop being white.



*Feel her limbs tremble  
In a deep place  
In the brine  
She is pierced and hemorrhaging the dark spill of our weakness*

*We continue to show up to work  
To pay our rents  
To eat from the bowl on the floor  
This is the flag of our appalling domestication*

*Tell me that worms ferry the fires of revolt  
Tell me mutiny is feigning death and will arise*

*Wake me with a feral grasp  
Kiss the sleeping hunger until it is wide and beyond taming*

*Tell me that the worms ferry the fires of revolt while the orchard arms itself and prepares to take  
on again the terrible uncontrolled substance of the forest*

*Let me descend home to primate, to poet, to person  
Let me burn*

- Andrew Mandell



WC—Sure, certainly. The rejection of the state as antithetical to indigenous tradition is one example. When I say that I don't intend to universalize, I don't know all indigenous traditions. But I know about a bunch of them and I can say I've never encountered an indigenous tradition that even conceptualized something like the state and that includes the so called Aztec Empire and so forth. They were radically out of step with the indigenous traditions of this hemisphere that I understand. But they were in no sense a state as it was formed and conceptualized in Europe. So, in my view, you see with the Aztecs, for example, a unique cultural mutation. I'm not even sure it's an evolution. There are some ruptures, some disjunctures in there that are a radical departure from the indigenous traditions around them, but it's very different from the state, which is a purely European concept.

Progressive is taken as an "enlightened," preferred alternative within the political discourse of the opposition. It essentially means—more of the same! It's the trajectory that's defined the evolution of European political, social, and economic forms of organization and those are interlocked since at least 800 AD. So you take that trajectory if you're a progressive and you work to help advance it, move it further along. That's progress you're talking about. I don't see anything constructive in the notion of progressivism at all, quite to the contrary. I came up at a time, the late 60's, when liberals/progressives were quite often the enemy. It wasn't conservatives. When you look at what distinguishes liberals from conservatives, that is, when you get right down to it, they want the same thing. They're working off the same assumptions. So I don't see there's a way to distinguish and it's becoming very clear within mainstream political discourse. Blue dog democrats are further to the right than some republicans. That's what happens when you work off the same basic set of principles. The paradigm articulated by those who espouse a belief in western liberalism is the box they're working within. So it essentially becomes a question of which route do you want to take to attain the same result. Often times the liberal approach is much more insidious and cruel than conservatives because they have to keep up the charade that they aren't that way. Liberalism is the enemy—that's what we learned from the perspective of SDS.

Andy—You mentioned earlier that anarchism is the best political option for white people. What's the best way for white people to support indigenous resistance?



the president's is a distant abstraction. Given the Haitian history of resistance through withdrawal into the local, I see this bottom-up approach to dehierarchicising Haitian society as most likely relevant and effective — first the 'invisible government' of Haiti, then the notional government in consequence. Would this destroy voodoo? I consider the collective knowledge, the history and experience of believers to be of more relevance to it and to its potential for human liberation than any authoritarian structure traditional to it. We are talking more a democratisation of voodoo than its destruction. Frankly, it is better such knowledge is communicated more freely, at least amongst those within this faith community. It would certainly proof it against the corruption and external political manipulation through leadership co-option that occurred under Duvalier that threatened voodoo's integrity and very existence during the 1986 dechoukaj. In my view, it would actually strength voodoo on the "Where there was one Toussaint, now there are a thousand" principle, as well as deepening its insights.

Is spiritual insight enough to change a society? In isolation, obviously not, but after voodoo serving as a powerhouse for popular resistance in Haiti and such minor impacts of belief on European history as the Reformation, I think only a fool would dismiss it as simple hocus-pocus and thin air. And voodoo does not exist in isolation from either Haiti's community — in fact, it is the heart of rural communities — nor its history, a generally proud (if sometimes horrifying) one of popular resistance from these self-same communities. The democratisation I've suggested above — and I hate the term — would only increase the conjunction between spiritual insight and social action — principally against hierarchy. The peasantry are constantly mindful of land issues. The insight and means now exist to allow population reductions to make subsistence a viable option again for the majority — permitting withdrawal from a grossly exploitative world economy and a return to the 19th century 'golden age of the peasant' on Haiti — and also a will to fight for land redistribution to meet immediate subsistence needs, with an emphasis on informal occupation rather than involving central government officials who will inevitably favour powerful export landowners, especially the US ones and will play political games (maybe even a revival of the incredibly idiotic mulatto v. Black stupidity that Aristide at least largely saw the back of) to keep them up as middle-wo/men regardless. Such land re/occupation movements are stock-on-trade in the Third World, and some — such as the Movement Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil — are highly effective too. Now as then, the costs of involvement in the external economy well outweigh the gains for the rural masses. And from the start, this is clearly a class issue that will disadvantage only exporting urban / coastal elites — something the latter may try to dress up in caste terms, but irrelevant if the rural masses do not have to seek their favour.

Does this model have wider revolutionary implications, particularly for Black people? I'm sure some of you are scoffing already: 'Not that many hounfords in south London — or smallholdings going free either'. Obviously not, but you're picking up on the wrong points of example — and some will do this deliberately to keep their typically White-run indocritinating, reformist anti-racist rackets ticking over regardless, which they're welcome to for all the good they'll do anyone.[\[122\]](#)

My first point is that pretty much every oppressed minority (including eventually even the oppressed majority — revolutionaries will get my drift) have got their own history and their own culture. Some of this derives simply from their own particularly experience of oppression, the way they've been classified as Other and resisted such treatment. But usually it's more than that. For a start, the culture has to start somewhere and unless it's taken such a hammering that these origins have been wholly obliterated by the dominant culture — and it happens, even down to elimination of folk memory, in which case pick it up where you can — and this will prove a rich resource in terms of unique insight and analogue with the current situation. I am certainly not saying people should be insular or chauvinist — we can learn from everyone — but I do think that as people start from their own unique culture, they should

cherish and understand it because they — of all people — are also the ones best placed to criticise and improve on it (criticising other peoples' cultures is also acceptable, if you first understand what first prompts you to do so in your own culture and are sensitive to genuine, unjustifiable contradictions in that of others).

My second point concerns this matter of criticism. One needs review one's own culture to discover what in it has liberatory potential and what actually only furthers your oppression and that of others. On the positive side, there are probably immediatist or perhaps mystical traditions that talk about evoking the sort of imminence I was discussing above with 'horse and rider' in voodoo ritual. These need to be checked to see if strict hierarchies inhere in them (as with voodoo initiations) and whether these can be bypassed, whether their association with social militancy / resistance led to their corruption into cultish or otherwise authoritarian forms (or, equally bad, promotes quietism and extreme social disengagement — the latter hardly a path to selfless unity in real world terms), whether their repertoire of analogue has effective and powerful resonances with you or not. The point of trying to achieve this aphoric state through a tradition that has most relevance to you — and I'm not saying your culture of birth is destiny here, if this doesn't have the strongest resonances for you — to give you the strength of mind to take on a whole civilisation that is excluding you from all that. I am not advocating this sort of spiritual quest as a 'hobby high' so you can take a holiday from their 'reality' to pep yourself up and dive back in, keeping the bloody system going! I hope this proviso is enough to shoo off hippy recuperators. This is not hot air or for personal indulgence — it's about finding somewhere to see the system from where it most is not, where it will appear most intolerable from, and where you can develop your critique of it and your own positive values. The point is to build belief and strength of mind, as well as strength of arms — for the point when there is no turning back. On the negative side, there's going to be a lot in your culture that's alienating rubbish — as Fanon notes, the colonised also internalise the values of their oppressors — and you have to understand why this is, because you're going to have to argue this through with yourself and others close to you.

\ The third point — possibly simultaneous with the second as a collective project to stop insularity and egotism — is that when you are exploring the best and worst of your own (and other) cultural traditions, you want to start living it and (without proselytising, a sure sign you're sinking into uncritical dogmatism — believe me, people's own dissatisfaction will be the source of their affinity with you, not any clever or persistent arguments you may dream up) encouraging others close to you to do likewise. There's no need to trumpet this from the rooftops — as MOVE found out at Osage Avenue, [\[123\]](#) sometimes drawing too much attention to yourself can have fatal consequences. The dominant culture devalues yours and exists to ridicule, minimise and ultimately obliterate it. Like the slaves in Haiti, the point is to take nothing from it, especially such hostile judgements. Criticise your culture in your terms — especially if you're excluding people on grounds that just feel like plain prejudice to you or which you can't satisfactorily justify — but not that of the dominant culture, which is designed to steamroller over you. There's no point having a nice liberal 'dialogue' with it when the point of such is only to change your mind. Your culture, your liberatory interpretation of it, should be your rock, the emotional support of yourself and others close to you. As you'll see, in the end, that's all there is.

And so, my fourth point — although you may have withdrawn mentally from Civilisation already, a time will come for 'fight or flight', withdrawing your co-operation physically from the economy also, as Haiti's plantation slaves fled to the Maroons. In the titular south London situation above, there is almost no way of making a living without feeding the system somehow, even if it's supplying some untaxed, under-the-counter niche. The Earth People in Jamaica are lucky enough to have a communal, self-sufficient organic lifestyle, but there aren't that many Maroons out there and if you're planning on starting your own enclave, land is

structive exchanges based upon the root of the word *primitive*, meaning *first, first peoples, first nations*. And I think that's the anarchist notion that's embraced under this mantle in a way. So I'd say right now, anarcho-primitivism is instructive but not decisive, at least not yet. The parameters drawn around anarcho-primitivism are pretty narrow at this point. You have people who subscribe in one way or another to that outlook and I know a number of them. But the number of people who understand and subscribe to it is very small compared with something like union organizing, for example, which has been eclipsed for a long time in the US.

One of the things with indigenous people and being first is you get a tradition that's being maintained. With anarcho-primitivism, you have the attempt to synthesize an attachment to various traditions and to explain what those attachments mean.

Andy—Do you think anarchist ideas have gained much traction over the past decade and where do you see radical political orientations going in the future?

WC—I don't know, we can go into Adorno and Marcuse and the nature of this synthetic reality which passes as culture. It's almost like Andy Warhol in a way, anarchism caught as a term and a fashion statement. So maybe there are a lot, maybe even a preponderance of people out there who would identify as anti-authoritarian. Within that broad framework there's a much smaller group of people who actually came to grips with what anarchism means and are serious in thought and action. Over the past few decades there seem to be quite a few people who have adopted the term anarchist as a viable option to a whole range of unpalatable options. They didn't want to be communists, didn't want to be socialists. They didn't want to be, didn't want to be, didn't want to be. Well, that's the first thing, by process of elimination they ended up anarchists and often in a serious way. But some people don't know it takes more than a pair of black Levi's, more than Doc Martin boots. Some of the people who adapted the fashion were and are serious, but it's difficult to decipher. So the answer is yes, anarchism has played an increasingly significant role over the past 10-20 years. But I couldn't say just how significant in terms of staying power. Fashions pass. I don't call myself an anarchist. I am indigenist in orientation and I think anarchism is as close as you can get coming out of the Western paradigm. I think there's a basis for working together on a whole lot of issues, so I see anarchism as very constructive, but that doesn't mean I am one. I see black militancy as being very constructive, always have, doesn't make me black. My closest relationships personally, politically, and otherwise are with black activists, I'm not one. We can be in solidarity. We can have commonality. We can struggle together as human beings and more objectively on analytical grounds. Having said that, if I was going to pursue organizing within the white community, anarchism is the stance I would take.

I reject the notion of the legitimacy of the state as indigenous people always have. They can talk about proto-states all they want but they can't come up with anything that's analogous to the European statist model. Nothing like the dominance it took on after the Treaty of Westphalia. The non-statist model includes social organization, political organization, so forth...a "nation," if you will. I don't consider nationalism as inherently the enemy. A nation and a state are two different things. In other words, looking at indigenous societies may give anarchists some idea of what an anarchist society may look like.

Liza—Do you see Anarchists as being in a unique position to support indigenous struggles more than liberals or progressives may be?

The Old law is also the law of Moses which is full of rules and regulations, but there does not seem to be a moral consistency amongst it - e.g. it says don't kill but it also prescribes capital punishment for some offences.

The essence of the law of Moses is restoration - the Sabbath laws. On the 7th day and the 7th year and in the 7X7 year Cycle of Jubilee restoration - everything is returned to the year zero. Sins and debts are extinguished, the people live by hunting and gathering rather than toiling the land and in the Jubilee year all land is returned to its traditional owner family so everyone is politically and economically equal and prosperous.

The land redistribution, the land resting and the sacrifices for sin are all to restore the people (as a collective tribal entity, not individual souls) to right relationship with God, the land and the people - the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' time, the law of Moses was administered by a class of politician/priests - the Sanhedrin, who had collaborated with the Roman colonisation of Israel through joint government - effectively turning the temple - the seat of political power - into an agency of Caesar. The temple itself was renovated and extended by Herod the great with Rome's money. The temple collected tax for Rome.

The Sanhedrin, while being political rulers, were also the only people who could forgive people of their sins through sacrifices according to Moses law. The ritual bathing (baptism) and the sacrifices of the temple were all corrupted. Sabbath laws were used legalistically to repress the people rather than, as they were intended, to be times of restoration.

Jesus embraced and proclaimed the essence of the law of Moses and the covenant of Abraham which is restoration and justice. This brought him in direct conflict with the religious authorities and the corrupt administration of the law of Moses.

When Jesus died the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom as God left the building. The corrupt administration of Moses law by the politician/priests had ended. In abolishing the corrupt law of the temple, the essence of the covenant of Abraham and the law of Moses was fulfilled.

Its a bit more complicated than that because Jesus not only re-engineers the temple law, by doing so he also extinguishes the king tradition in the archetype of Saul, David and Solomon, and returns government to the structures of tribalism. But that's another story.

## INTERVIEW WITH WARD CHURCHILL

November 7, 2009

Interviewed by Andy Lewis and Liza Menno-Bloom

Andy—Has anarcho-primitivism contributed anything to indigenous resistance movements over the past decade or so?

WC—Well, after you get past the term, which is a little off-putting, it's not as bad as anarcho-syndicalism, but that aside, I don't see that its played any particular role in terms of indigenous resistance per say. It has, on the other hand, created the basis for a lot of resonance with indigenous ideas that has translated into concrete action. So, that dynamic is very healthy. It doesn't make anarcho-primitivists indigenous. Anarcho-primitivists envision an alternative reality but it doesn't mean you're there yet. Only a fool would attempt to actualize that alternate reality absent the context for actualization. John Zerzan uses a computer for example. And whether you're an anarcho-primitivist or not, the geographical space of North America is an issue for anyone living in that space. And there's no getting around the fact that you're either a settler or indigenous. So how you deal with that reality is important. There are con-

sparse and it costs. When asked, an associate of mine working with the Hadza, a hunter / gatherer tribe in central Africa, told them to "take nothing" offered by Civilisation, as this was a sure route to assimilation. As we generally are assimilated to the extent they have taken all means of living from us, only to sell it back to us, I'd say take the absolute minimum from them to survive, stealing it or otherwise obtaining it in a way that minimises their profit and your contact with them if at all possible, and try to figure out how to do without even that. Obviously search your own cultural history (and that of other oppressed groups, where relevant and useful) as to the best ways to 'fight or flight', how others survived before you and how that can be made relevant for today, but the bottom line is that this Civilisation is as much a prison, as much akin to a slave compound, as pre-revolutionary San Domingue. As far as they're concerned, you owe them a living and no-one's allowed to just leave voluntarily. If weak, you can stay in place building culturally and emulating the slaves' covert sabotage (at least upping the cost of your ongoing captivity), but if there are no other options, you should be building for your 'Night of Fire', crashing as much of the system as possible so it's impossible for them to hold or control you any longer. That's why I was saying to do your utmost to break any imposed dependency on a system you're going to have to destroy as the insurgent slaves of Haiti did, as completely and with as little compromise as possible. Any dependency will only stay your hand to that extent. However useless you've made yourself to them economically, they need you — you shouldn't need them. Your cultural contacts are natural allies, but the point of not isolating yourself from other oppressed groups, of also seeking to understand both the liberatory content and oppressive potential of their perspectives, is that they too are potential allies, equally keen to break free. On Haiti, the 'Night of Fire' was about destroying the plantations that both imprisoned the slaves and supplied the rationale for their masters to remain in the colony, using the traditional weapon of the oppressed, fire. Realistically, in a modern industrial economy characterised by a highly specialised division of labour, we are talking small numbers prepared to act unless there is a serious broader societal crisis — so clandestine, targeted attacks on the power, communications and transport infrastructure are most likely to precipitate such crisis. What would the military bomb in a war to paralyse a country? So you have your target list — though lacking B52s, you need to think of techniques available to all to take them out. Too many groups have been compromised chasing rare, specialist kit from compromised suppliers when something nearly as good was available for £1.99 from the local hardware store — where anyone else can get it too if they share your grievances. Lastly on this, never think you can't win. That's the first thing the dominant culture teaches you — powerlessness. Against all the odds, the barefoot slaves of Haiti typically armed with only clubs and the promise of Africa won, seeing the back not of one but of two of the greatest powers of the Napoleonic era.

My last point — and one easily forgotten — is that when you get out, they're still not going to let you go. Most of the history of Haiti was attempts to drag it back into the world economy by hook or crook, even when it was grossly impoverished. If you sneaked out, they'll search for you. If you're weak, they'll drag you back. If not (unlikely, given you're up against nation-state sized opponents here!), they'll offer to trade with you or otherwise cut you into their power games as a disposable 'ally', anything to make you dependent on them. And, finally, there's the 'Hussite' gambit, whereby they concede they can't get in or compromise you, but surround you and hope things rot in there, that hierarchy and domination return, typically justified with reference to their external threat. Never forget the vision of autonomy and equality — and "take nothing". This game of pockets of freedom breaking through and then in weeks, years, decades even, being reabsorbed will go on until the end of history, the end of Time, but just as they may get us in the end, there is an example of free community to set and to enjoy in the meantime. As they're not in the habit of lopping off feet like the old slavers, you

can start building for your next break for it as soon as they drag you back into Civilisation's belly, no doubt with more support each time due to the example you've set..



## RILKE

"You must understand the concept of the "open," which I have tried to propose in the elegy, in such a way that the animals degree of consciousness sets it into the world without the animals' placing the world over against itself at every moment (as we do); the animal is in the world; we stand before it by virtue of that particular turn which our consciousness has taken.

By the "open" therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; they, too, are "object" and thus "opaque" and closed to the one who observes and judges. The animal, the flower, has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when one human being sees their own vastness in another, their beloved, and in their elevation toward God.

Rilke, commenting on his eighth elegy in a letter (February 25, 1926)  
p. 114

The Old Testament, and particularly the Prophets, are as much concerned with the negative, the fight against idolatry, as they are with the positive, the recognition of God.

We forget that the essence of idolatry is not the worship of this or that particular idol but is a specifically human attitude. This attitude may be described as the deification of things, of partial aspects of the world and humanity's submission to such things, in contrast to an attitude where one's life is devoted to the realization of the highest principles of life, a being made in the likeness of God.

Words can become idols, and machines can become idols; leaders, the state, power, and political groups may as well. Science and the opinion of one's neighbors can become idols, and God has become an idol for many.

Today it is not Baal and Astarte but the deification of the state and of power and the deification of the machine and of success in our own culture which threaten the most precious spiritual possessions...we can unite in firm negation of idolatry and find perhaps more of a common faith in this negation than in any affirmative statements about God. Certainly we shall find more of humility and brotherly love.

Instead of christians dismissing and re-interpreting what is clear and plain in the bible, they should be honest and accept that their own philosophy of good and evil has nothing to do with the bible.

The "imperative" of Jesus was to love god and love each other. There was no moral judgement of good and evil. The paradigm of love (god is love) is the radical alternative to notions of good and evil.

What is "clear and plain" is (for example) that Joshua was exalted for his military deeds, not condemned in the bible. A moral, good/evil analysis just does not fit, especially if you are a pacifist.

I say, Jesus was a fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic tradition, at least that's what he said he was. There is no biblical basis whatsoever to support the suggestion that god flowed backwards in Israel. Only the lens of the Roman empire and its creeds can lead you to that conclusion.

I say there is indeed a third way and this is exactly what Jesus taught and proclaimed. You cannot understand anything Jesus said about the old law or about his arguments with the Pharisees without understanding the paradox of the stories and the historical context of the Hasmonean dynasty (including Pharisees and Sadducees) collaboration with Caesar. Jesus does not dismiss the old law, he fulfills it, yet he defies the religious legalism and moralism of the temple. This is the third way.

I am not saying the bible is a manifesto for violence as some militarist christians have done. All I am saying is that the bible has nothing to say about violence, the point of the stories is about something else. If we get obsessed about moral judgements of violence in bible stories we are distracted from what the story is really about.

Jesus should not be interpreted through the lens of the state religion of the very empire that crucified Jesus, instead we should look at Jesus through the lens that he himself provided for us to understand him - the old testament.

You cannot say that "love your enemy" is a pacifist imperative unless you can explain some pacifist meaning into "I have not come to bring peace but a sword". You must either cherry pick from the bible, embracing what appeals to you and declaring it "Imperative" and dismissing what you don't like or agree with. - or you must continue searching for a meaning that unites the two apparently contradictory passages.

In short - love your enemies means love the gentile Samaritans. In the previous war of liberation, 200 years earlier, the gentiles in Israel and Judah were killed. The nationalism of both the Sanhedrin and of the revolutionary zealots relied on this hatred of the foreigner to build their own credibilities with the population. Jesus on the other hand says love your enemies, teaches and visits the samaritans and we are told in acts that the whole Samaritan people turned to God, that is they joined with the circumscised Hebrews, and this is the significance of the circumcision controversy throughout the NT - should the Samaritans do it? The parable of the good Samaritan has nothing to do with charity for the unfortunate but is about the question Jesus poses "Who is my brother?".

The union of the Samaritans and circumscised Hebrews, apparently orchestrated by Jesus himself, seems to me to be a major factor in Israel achieving the strength and unity to overthrow the Romans in the 30 years following Jesus death. Previously, the gentile Samaritans were passively supportive of Caesar but after Jesus' mission were active supporters of the Hebrew people.

The old law is primarily the covenant of Abraham which is the unity of God, the people and the land between the Euphrates, Nile and Jordan rivers. In this covenant there are no rules and regulations - only faith. It was the faithfulness, not the moral righteousness, of Abraham that brought the covenant into being.

# Against a Moral/ Pacifist Reading of the Bible

by John Tracy (from JesusRadicals.com forum)

For 1700 years mainstream Christianity has embraced first and foremost the Roman creeds (Nicene, Apostles') as the lens by which to perceive the Jesus of the New Testament and then, as people here have indicated, to use Jesus as a lens to perceive (or dismiss) the Old Testament.

This is back to front. The old testament is the lens to understand Jesus, Jesus is the lens to understand the Roman empire.

Everything Jesus mentions in the NT is referring to something in the OT. Jesus says he came to fulfill the old law. He announced his mission in Luke by reading from Isaiah when proclaiming he had come to heal the sick, free the prisoner, give sight to the blind and proclaim the jubilee year. The jubilee year itself is the zenith of Moses' law.

In John 10 when Jesus confirms to the Jewish authorities that he is the messiah he does so in the context of the Hannukah/dedication/festival of light ceremony at the Jerusalem temple, a ceremony that celebrates the successful guerilla war against the Greek empire. The meaning of "Messiah" in this context was clear to all in the temple.

The name Jesus and Joshua are the same, Jesus was named after the man who lead Israel through war into the promised land.

Joshua was not an invading colonial power. He was restoring the covenant of Abraham which was made not through invasion and conquest but by tithing to Malchezedec who, before Abraham, was the traditional owner of Israel, or at least around Jerusalem

Jesus says over and over again that he is part of the OT tradition yet modern christendom and the creeds have severed him from this tradition.

Those who look for pacifist wisdom in the bible will find disappointment and confusion. Those who look for an indiginist, anti-civilisation, anti-imperialist wisdom will find the bible overflows with insights. (including the restoration by Joshua)

Regarding the question about sin and God's minimisation of it.

It is the christendom tradition, not the bible, that has an obsessive focus on sin. The obsessive focus of the bible is on right relationship in the land of Abraham's covenant. The people of the covenant are repeatedly forgiven for their sins in a restoration process - Noah, Moses, David and Jesus. The emphasis is on restoration and elimination of sin through the re-establishment of right relationship, not on trying to contain it.

What is clear is that the OT framework, the same framework that Jesus reclaimed from the Pharisees and Sadducees, does not consider violence in war to be evil. In fact even when the violence of enemy imperial armies is used against Israel this is described as the hand of god.

Pacifists who ignorantly promote the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah (Swords into plowshares) do not seem to read the whole prophecy including the terrible violence that must occur before the time of peace can be established.

The nature of sin is a big topic that I won't go into here except to remind people of the nature of original sin - according to Genesis it is the knowledge of good and evil itself. Paul tells us that it is the law itself that creates sin and through the abolition of (or transcendence over) the law we are made sinless.

If we try to understand the bible through the lens of good and evil then we have departed from a biblical theology.

# Woman in Nature

By Susan Griffin, Excerpt

He breaks the wilderness. He clears the land of trees, brush, weed. The land is brought under his control; he has turned waste into a garden. Into her soil he places his plow. He labors. He plants. He sows. By the sweat of his brow, he makes her yield. She opens her broad lap to him. She smiles on him. She prepares him a feast. She gives up her treasures to him. She makes him grow rich. She yields. She conceives. Her lap is fertile. Out of her dark interior, life arises. What she does to his seed is a mystery to him. He counts her yielding as a miracle. He sees her workings as effortless. Whatever she brings forth he calls his own. He has made her conceive. His land is a mother. She smiles on the joys of her children. She feeds him generously. Again and again, in his hunger, he returns to her. Again and again she gives to him. She is his mother. Her powers are a mystery to him. Silently she works miracles for him. Yet, just as silently, she withholds from him. Without reason, she refuses to yield. She is fickle. She dries up. She is bitter. She scorns him. He is determined he will master her. He will make her produce at will. He will devise ways to plant what he wants in her, to make her yield more to him.

He deciphers the secrets of the soil. He recites the story of the carbon cycle. He recites the story of the nitrogen cycle. He determines the composition of the soil. (Over and over he can plant the same plot of land with the same crop.) He says that the soil is a lifeless place of storage, he says that the soil is what is tilled by farmers. He says that the land need no longer lie fallow. That what went on in her quietude is no longer a secret, that the ways of the land can be managed. That the farmer can ask whatever he wishes of the land. (He replaces the fungi, bacteria, earthworms, insects, decay.) He names all that is necessary, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and these he says he can make...

Phosphoric acid, nitrogen fertilizers, ammonium sulfate, white phosphate, potash, iron sulfate, nitrate of soda, superphosphate, calcium cyanamide, calcium oxide, calcium magnesium, zinc sulfate, phenobarbital, amphetamine, magnesium, estrogen, copper sulfate, meprobarnate, thalidomide, benzethonium chloride, Valium, hexachlorophine, diethylstilbestrol.

What device she can use to continue she does. She says that the pain is unbearable. "Give me something," she says. What he gives her she takes into herself without asking why. She says now that the edges of what she sees are blurred. The edges of what she sees, and what she wants, and what she is saying, are blurred...She says that the first pain is gone, or that she cannot remember it, or that she cannot remember why this began, or what she was like before, or if she will survive without what he gives her to take, but that she does not know, or cannot remember, why she continues.

He says she cannot continue without him. He says she must have what he gives her. He says also that he protects her from predators. That he gives her dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, dieldrin, chlorinated naphthalenes, chlordan, parathion, Malathion, selenium, pentachlorophenol, arsenic, sodium arsenite, amitrole. That he has rid her of pests, he says.

And he has devised ways to separate himself from her. He sends machines to do his labor. His working has become as effortless as hers. He accomplishes days of labor with a small motion of his hand. His efforts are more astonishing than hers. No longer praying, no longer imploring, he pronounces words from a distance and his orders are carried out. Even with his back turned to her she yields to him. And in his mind, he imagines that he can conceive without her. In his mind, he no longer relies on her. What he possesses, he says, is his to use and to abandon.



# Community

By John Zerzan (from *The Nihilist Dictionary*)

**Com-mu-ni-ty** n. 1. a body of people having the same interests. 2.[Ecol.] an aggregate of organisms with mutual relations. 3. a concept invoked to establish solidarity, often when the basis for such affiliation is absent or when the actual content of that affiliation contradicts the stated political goal of solidarity. Community, by which one obviously means more than, say, neighborhood, is a very elusive term but a continuing touchstone of radical value. In fact, all manner of folks resort to it, from the pacifist encampments near nuclear test sites to “serve the people” leftists with their sacrifice-plus-manipulation approach to the proto-fascist Afrikaaner settlers. It is invoked for a variety of purposes or goals, but as a liberatory notion is a fiction. Everyone feels the absence of community, because human fellowship must struggle, to even remotely exist, against what “community” is in reality. The nuclear family, religion, nationality, work, school, property, the specialism of roles—some combination of these seems to comprise every surviving community since the imposition of civilization. So we are dealing with an illusion, and to argue that some qualitatively higher form of community is allowed to exist within civilization is to affirm civilization. Positivity furthers the lie that the authentically social can co-exist with domestication. In this regard, what really accompanies domination, as community, is at best middle-class, respect-the-system protest

Fifth Estate, for example, undercuts its (partial) critique of civilization by upholding community and ties to it in its every other sentence. At times it seems that the occasional Hollywood film (e.g. *Emerald Forest*, *Dances With Wolves*) outdoes our anti-authoritarian journals in showing that a liberatory solidarity springs from non-civilization and its combat with the “community” of industrial modernity.

Jacques Camatte discussed capital’s movement from the stage of formal domination to that of real domination. But there appear to be significant grounds from which to project the continuing erosion of support for existing community and a desire for genuine solidarity and freedom. As Fredy Perlman put it, near the end of his exceptional *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*: “What is known is that Leviathan, the great artifice, single and world-embracing for the first time, in His-story, is decomposing. . . . It is a good time for people to let go of its sanity, its masks and armors, and go mad, for they are already being ejected from its pretty polis.”

The refusal of community might be termed a self defeating isolation but it appears preferable, healthier, than declaring our allegiance to the daily fabric of an increasingly self-destructive world. Magnified alienation is not a condition chosen by those who insist on the truly social over the falsely communal. It is present in any case, due to the content of community. Opposition to the estrangement of civilized, pacified existence should at least amount to naming that estrangement instead of celebrating it by calling it community. The defense of community is a conservative gesture that faces away from the radical break required. Why defend that to which we are held hostage? In truth, there is no community. And only by abandoning what is passed off in its name can we move on to redeem a vision of communion and vibrant connectedness in a world that bears no resemblance to this one. Only a negative “community,” based explicitly on contempt for the categories of existent community, is legitimate and appropriate to our aims.

hodge-podge of indigenous groups. Unlike the countless movies that feature white teacher-figures who single-handedly instruct and rescue hopeless youth of color, Jake is depicted as the ignorant “baby” with an empty-cup that needs to be filled with new knowledge. Neither his military training nor his technological knowledge nor his civilized eyes are of use as he learns to truly see.

The two scenes that best reflect the film’s attempts at sensitivity occur after Jake is officially inducted into clan. In the first instance, Jake attempts to warn the community about the mercenary’s plan to destroy their hometree by demanding to speak as one of them. Just as he begins to assert himself, Colonel Quaritch disables his avatar link, causing Jake to return to his reality and his Na’vi shell to fall to the ground. As little more than an alien in an expensive suit, the scene showed that Jake is in no position to assert his will or invoke newly bestowed rights. The second scene that comes to mind occurs after Jake reappears as the One Who Rides Last Shadow (Turok Mak’to). Despite his new powerful position, he goes to Tsu’Tey—now the rightful Omaticaya leader—and asks permission to speak and to fly alongside him as a brother. The scenes work together to show the conflicted and precarious position Jake inhabits throughout the film as stranger and brother, enemy and friend, invader and guest.

Jake becoming Na’vi at the end of the film raises some noteworthy tensions. Because cloning and genetic manipulation enable Jake to experience the Na’vi in the first place, his entire story rests on support for these destructive and irreverent technologies. (Thank you to Kathan from Anarchy Radio for illuminating this point during our discussion.) Second, Jake becoming Omaticaya is also uncomfortable given America’s current racial dynamic and discourse. A historical example might help explain this point. In the book, *Black Like Me* (1961), journalist John Howard Griffin artificially darkens his skin and travels through several segregated states to experience living as a Black man in a white world. Yet as one who could erase his dark-skin at the end of his experiment, albeit with new knowledge, even his transformative experiences are not enough to cross him into a new social category. To relate it back to the film, Jake’s ability to go beyond walking in Omaticaya shoes to completely embodying them physically strikes a strange cord because of the ways the U.S. culture conceives identity and race. This is one of the many visions *Avatar* puts forth that warrants wrestling with.

For the complete review, visit [www.jesusradicals.com/analyzing-avatar/](http://www.jesusradicals.com/analyzing-avatar/)



# ANALYZING AVATAR: A REVIEW ESSAY

By Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, Jesus Radicals

By the time I decided to see James Cameron's *Avatar*, I had already heard enough about the film to be unsure whether it would be worth the time, effort and petroleum to see it. After seeing the film through my Christian anti-civilization leaning anarchist vegan antiracist woman of color lenses, my sense is that *Avatar* is more complex than many of its detractors or advocates acknowledge.

## The Na'vi

As I reflected on *Avatar*'s depiction of the Na'vi, I believe that the praise and the critique it receives depends in part on the critic's view of nature, nonhuman animals and civilization. As a woman of color and an ethical vegan, I experienced the animal-like Omatiyaga as a robust community with valuable traditions, language, spiritual practices and knowledge. Although the Omatiyaga represent a hyper-idealized collage of various indigenous communities, several of its members are easily recognizable as people of African descent in part because of the film's technology. Therefore, when the overtly feline Omatiyaga adopt recognizable primate behaviors like swinging through the trees and an invader calls them "blue monkeys," the film immediately called to mind longstanding racist stereotypes about Black people in particular being a devolving, subhuman species. In the U.S. context where the history of Black people's legal status as enslaved beasts is still raw, I am not surprised that some people bristle at an African-inspired tribe being depicted as humanoid animal-like aliens. It would be irresponsible not to seriously engage this view of the Na'vi because of the film's environmental message or its anti-civ leanings.

## The Colonizers

Some of the comments I heard before seeing *Avatar* was that the characters leading the Pandoran occupation were too and that "all the bad people were white." To address the second point first, it is simply incorrect that white people alone are the enemy in this film. For example, Latina pilot Trudy Chacon (Michelle Rodriguez) and Indian scientist Max Patel (Dileep Pao) are part of the military and corporate operation before choosing solidarity with the Na'vi. There are also peripheral characters and non-speaking extras who are Black, Latino and Asian. While the racial representation in the film is small, I nevertheless found it disconcerting that the person who complained about all the white people being bad did not notice that the bad people were not all white. To the critique that the film portrayed military and corporate personnel without substance and complexity, I would respond with a yes—and a no. On one hand, characters like Colonel Miles Quaritch and businessman Parker Selfridge are motivated by nothing but bloodlust and greed respectively. They have no redeemable traits or backstory, making it easier for the audience to relish their comeuppance. On the other hand, what *Avatar* lacks in subtlety, it gains in accurately capturing the sordid history of colonization, domination and extermination of indigenous people in the U.S. and beyond. In this regard, *Avatar* does not need to try to make the military and corporate forces "look bad." The distant and recent history upon which the film draws speaks for itself.

## Jake Sully

For most of the film, *Avatar* demonstrates an awareness of the pitfalls involved in telling the story of a dominant white male protagonist living among an alien community modeled after a



## Tribes of Yahweh

Gottwald, Epilogue, excerpt

"If the firm core of Israel's 'covenantal' faith is in fact an egalitarian paradigm, it is precisely one of my aims to acknowledge the rich multiplicity of religious imagery generated by an astonishing range of cultural and sociopolitical experiences entailed in the upthrust of this egalitarian people into ancient Near Eastern history.

In this vein, it is clear that literary tools of various sorts will greatly enrich our perception of the remarkable expressiveness of Israel's central egalitarian paradigm. Employing rhetorical criticism and metaphor (with its two levels of 'vehicle' and 'tenor'), Phyllis Trible has recently argued that Israel's 'God male and female' sums up and gives impetus to many surprising expressions of feminine as well as masculine freedom and initiative, which simplistic 'faith against culture' and 'patriarchal hierarchic' models have entirely missed or deliberately suppressed. I consider her study one way of carrying out a strategy of feminism (meaning for her not a narrow focus upon women, but rather a critique of culture in light of misogyny) in biblical studies which I both invite and urge. By her rhetorical method, Trible conjures a biblical literary world congruent with a central egalitarian paradigm, so that the body of her work provokes urgent social situational questions: What forms of egalitarian social organization, in what times and spaces, in ancient Israel were the matrices of these expressions of feminine creativity? And what forms of hierarchic social organization in biblical times and later were responsible for subordinating and obscuring these expressions of feminine creativity?"

# DEATH AND RESSURECTION, JESUS AS LIVED METAPHOR

By Jared Himstedt

"First of all, Mary, the Mother, plays a very prominent role in a corner of the world where women had been systematically downgraded for tens of generations. She is not explicitly called Mother Earth, but her crucified son goes under the ground and then rises up, like vegetation, like Demeter's daughter Persephone, like Isis' twin brother Osiris. This news is not at the margins of the myth but at its core.

And the news goes much deeper. The crucified Jesse is like Serapis the bull, Osiris's double. By his death he redeems the living. New shoots are fertilized by fallen plants. Death is overcome, its finality is taken away. Out of the dead fragments sprout the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. The bull or the lamb gives himself for the sake of the living, for Mother Earth's renewal."

I am tempted to print the above quote and leave it be to speak for itself, but I think the possibility it proposes for new understanding and interpretation of the life of the Christ is profound. I am still trying to digest the implications of the hypothesis I'm dealing with here: that the life of Christ is a lived metaphor dealing with natural cycles and rhythms of death and rebirth.

The death and rebirth of all living things...their inherent connectedness are central themes common to much indigenous spirituality. In genera; we see a lack of messianic/deliverance motifs in indigenous mythology and prophecy. If Meyers and others are right, and the Fall is a fall into civilization, then it makes sense for nature based peoples to not have their spirituality hinged upon future deliverance. Maybe that's not what Jesus was bringing either, or maybe the salvation that was being offered and the Kingdom being promised were of a different order. He brings his gospel of good news to a domesticated and civilized tribal people. Their entire history with their God is riddled with reminders of how they have strayed, beginning with the garden. They have sought the amenities of society as their own God declares that it is a rejection of God. They do so out of an explicit desire to be like those around them. They know better.

Christ does go into the ground and sprout up again, although changed. Christ's death and resurrection reminds them of truths they already know. Death is not final. It has no power because we return, changed in form, in bodies unrecognizable to our former selves. All things go under the ground and spring back in renewed life. This truth is obvious to earth-based peoples, but needs to be retold and danced out before the eyes of those who have strayed and forsaken the Way.

And how appropriate for us, now civilized, once wild. We are those post-tribal aliens who need someone to show us a sign of reminder, to ignite deep in our instinct and soul a truth so deep and ancient that we cannot imagine how we ever forgot it. A reminder or renewal...all things made new. A reminder to not fear death, that it is not final nor has any power to halt life. Death is not conquered by an act but is conquered already. The only true finality would be if the death/rebirth cycle of natural rhythms and the ancient knowledge and wisdom that reminds us to heed it were disrupted.

I find myself at a complete reversal. Rather than a hope in divine intervention that will end the life/death cycle, our hope lies in the continuation of that cycle. Our hope given to

us as Christ dances out the story our souls already knew is that this is good and enough. I don't know how lions lay down with lambs. I know how we are laid into the ground only to return in new life. May we repent of our need for such reminders and commit ourselves anew to the preservation of this metaphor and the truth that it directs us to.



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## briars

when he was young  
he made his home in the briars  
protected by their thorns  
hiding there like a bird

now I am grown up  
and I cut and burn them  
where they grow  
cursing them  
when they prick my skin

they have not changed  
what has happened?

- Joel Cimmaron